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THE DOCTRINE

OF

THE CHURCH OF GENEVA

ILLUSTRATED,

IN A

Series of Sermons

PREACHED BY

THE MODERN DIVINES OF THAT CITY.

EDITED BY

THE REVEREND J. S. PONS,

One of his Majesty's Chaplains at the Dutch Chapel, St. James's Palace, and Minister of the French Episcopal Church, called Eglise des Grecs.

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PREFACE,

BY THE EDITOR.

A Theological Review highly esteemed on the Continent—the "*Archives du Christianisme*,"—commences an article in its number for May, 1824, on a work of one of the Genevese divines, with the following observations:—"It is a happy circumstance," says the writer, "for a Church to observe among her junior members, the spread of that spirit of charity and of zeal, which entitles her to entertain the highest hopes of the rising generation. But, perhaps, it is an advantage by no means less deserving of her regard, to be able to boast among her older leaders, men who may be justly

called the patriarchs of the faith. This remark applies, with peculiar force, to the important period in which we live. Those grey-headed men who have been found faithful amidst the general corruption, exhibit a brilliant attestation to the faith which, in their infancy, they received from their fathers. They stand forth as witnesses, that those divine principles of our religion, which, though new champions proclaim them with new zeal, so far from being, as the world would term them, novelties, are, on the contrary, no other than the old Gospel ground which our ancestors have trodden before us. Such veterans in the service of Christianity, a remnant of whom is found in the bosom of every Church, serve as links to connect the epoch, which, beginning at the Reformation, expired amidst the disorders that darkened the closing years of the last century, with the new era which, taking its birth from that disastrous crisis, and fertilized and secured by the diffu-

sion of genuine scriptural principles, promises to disseminate Christianity through the world, with a purity and copiousness such as have hitherto been unknown to the Church. Their apostolic influence is yet needed among us, to restrain the excesses of a zeal not, perhaps, always sufficiently enlightened; to set before their younger brethren lessons such as it would not be possible for them to receive with too much earnestness; and to instruct every class by their example and their precepts, that the spirit with which God endues his servants is a 'spirit of power,' indeed, but 'of love' also, and 'of a sound mind.' "

The writer then proceeds to particularize the Church of Geneva as peculiarly happy in being enabled to number in the lists of her leading members, not a few of those justly venerated men who, after having explored the fields of science, come and place the treasures which their labours have collected there at the foot of the Cross of Christ. At the head of these ve-

nerable teachers he names JAMES LOUIS PESCHIER—a name no less dear to the churches of France than to that of the Genevese republic; having pronounced a just eulogy upon the extent and profundity of erudition by which he is distinguished—and of which a remarkable proof is given—the reviewer adds that in the character of M. Peschier the humility of the Chistian is yet still more conspicuous than the learning of the professor.

On account of a painful weakness of sight, with which he has been afflicted for many years past, M. Peschier has been obliged to confine himself to extemporaneous preaching; to this circumstance it is owing that the Editor has to regret his being unable to enrich the present selection with any discourse of the professor's composition.

To those acquainted with Geneva, the reputation of CELLERIER is equally well known. Five generations have been edified by the pious and affectionate lessons of this excellent divine;

and in the minds of the oldest as well as the youngest of his fellow citizens, whatever suggests the idea of goodness, greatness of mind, sound piety, and Christian benevolence, is associated with his name. Unassuming, disinterested, and without the least particle of worldly ambition, the Rev. J. I. S. Cellerier devoted thirty years of his life to the care of a country parish, only occasionally preaching at Geneva; and when at length he was prevailed upon to retire upon a small pension, and to transfer his labours to his son, he still chose to remain among the flock over whom he had presided. The son proved himself not unworthy of such a father. He was some time after called to the chair of the professor of Hebrew, at Geneva, on which occasion he was succeeded by M. Gaussen, who has ever since continued to tread in the path marked out for him by his revered predecessor and friend.

The Editor, whose design in this volume is

to introduce to the acquaintance of the English reader as many of the celebrated members of the Genevese church as its narrow limits will admit, cannot adopt a better mode of conveying some idea of the successors of M. Cellerier, than by quoting a few passages from the farewell sermon addressed to his village congregation in 1816, by that excellent man himself. "You regret," he says, alluding to his son, "the loss of the young minister who was my immediate successor amongst you. He was born amongst you; his earnest wish was to live and die with you, and to repay your affection, by proving that he felt the most tender concern for your spiritual and eternal welfare. His hope of being useful has, however, been directed into another channel; and it is with heartfelt sorrow that he sees himself under the necessity of leaving you after so short a period, and of submitting to those superior orders which, under divine Providence, call him to

supply the wants of the Church in another manner.

"That Providence, ever merciful, gives you in his room another self, the friend of his heart, a man mighty in the Scriptures; one who, like his Master, will speak to you *with authority;* one who has the inestimable gift of awakening, of inspiring, of elevating the soul; whose heart already yearns after you; who, worthy to be the organ of God's word, will preach it to you in the same sublime purity in which he received it. He comes amongst you in the happy season of his youth—to you he makes an offering of the first fruits of those eminent talents which are treasured up in his mind—he places wholly at your disposal a rich deposit of high and unadulterated feelings, fed and supported by faith. To him, with unbounded confidence, which he will not fail to justify, we resign the awful charge of your souls, hitherto entrusted to us."

Eight years of a vigilant and successful ministry have fully justified the proud hopes entertained of M. Gaussen by his venerated friend; still a daily witness of his zealous and assiduous labours to promote the cause of truth.

From the four admirable volumes of sermons published by M. Cellerier, the Editor has selected one only, (Sermon I.) His selection would probably have been less limited, had he not known that the Rev. Dr. Luscombe, who, during a residence of many years in France, has had ample opportunities of acquiring a knowledge of the Protestant clergy of that kingdom, and of the excellent publications which they have sent into the world, has included several of the discourses of this author in a work which will appear about the same time, and which was undertaken with the same object as the Editor's compilation.

Of Mr. Gaussen's composition the reader will find a specimen in Sermons III. and IV.; and

he will also be enabled to form an idea of the talents and piety of the YOUNGER CELLERIER from Sermon XII. which was kindly communicated to the Editor by the author himself.

Another name, not less entitled to the respect of the friends of religion, which is associated with these in the present volume, (see Sermon II.) is that of the Rev. C. E. F. MOULINIÉ; who, in the course of forty years of unremitted public service, has employed himself in the publication of a variety of tracts and theological works, which, altogether, may be regarded as a complete course of divinity. Thus, his intention in his "*Lettres à une Mère Chrétienne*," was to lead men to embrace the truths of the Gospel, by showing them the dignity of their nature, and their relations with the Almighty. (An abridgment of this work was afterwards published under the title of "*Moyen de connoître Dieu*.") Shortly after this work, M. Moulinié published his "*Instructions et Méditations sur*

Jésus Christ;" the object of which is, to consider our Lord in all the various respects in which he is represented to us in revelation. In another tract—"*Enseignement graduel des Vérités religieuses par Jésus Christ et les Apôtres*",—he lays down the basis upon which is founded our faith in the mysteries of the Gospel; while, in the "*Chaine des Vérités Evangéliques,*" these truths are presented in a series, so as to form a complete system of belief. But a most important topic remained yet to be discussed—the existence of evil, and the fallen condition of mankind. After having slightly touched upon the subject in his "*Promenades Philosophiques et Religieuses aux Environs du Mont Blanc, au Jura, et à l'Hospice du Grand St. Bernard,*" M. Moulinié undertook a more specific and regular discussion of this question in his "*Leçons de la Parole de Dieu sur l'Etendue et l'Origine du Mal dans l'Homme.*" Finally, in the course of last year, M. Moulinié

published a volume on *the Divinity of Christ*, and one *on the Redemption of Mankind*, to be followed by two others, the subjects of which will be *Sanctification*, and *Final Judgment*.

The Rev. PIERRE DEJOUX, a contemporary of these distinguished men, equally indefatigable in his professional exertions, an almost universal linguist, and gifted with rare talents as a teacher, is author of four volumes of sermons, 8vo. entitled "*Prédication de l'Evangile.*" (See Sermon VII.)

In the Rev. PIERRE PICOT, another of her most brilliant ornaments, the Church of Geneva has recently (in 1822) sustained a loss, which will be long and severely felt. Almost fifty years of a successful ministry had endeared him, like a father, to a numerous train of affectionate pupils, by whom his mild and conciliating manners can never be forgotten. Never did an individual exist endowed with finer feelings, less liable to be disturbed by envy

or distrust, or more free from the least tinge of moroseness. His whole life was passed in the exercise of charity and love; whilst the dignity and manliness of his eloquence in the pulpit, never failed to penetrate his delighted auditory with the deep conviction with which he was himself imbued. Of his forcible appeals in the cause of charity, the reader will find a specimen in Sermon X.; nor were the exertions of the same fervid zeal less powerful when kindled into a flame of gratitude and devotion to his Maker.

It is not possible, within the limits of a preface, to perform the agreeable task of pointing out all who are worthy of praise, or fit to be held up for imitation, among the established clergy of Geneva—not to speak of the charge of invidiousness and of prolixity to which the Editor exposes himself, by singling out individuals for that purpose, from a church so distinguished by talent, piety, and virtue. He

cannot but feel, however, that he would be justly liable to the imputation of ingratitude, were he to omit the mention of those, who, to their other claims upon his recollection, have added that of kindly and readily contributing their valuable manuscripts to his work. Among these, he acknowledges himself particularly indebted to the Rev. Louis Ferriére,—the friend of his youth;—who is excelled by none, in a Church where assiduity is the general characteristic, in the conscientious and unremitted discharge of the pastoral functions. The name of Diodati ranks high in the history of the Genevese church; its ancestral respectability is worthily supported by the Rev. Al. A. E. Diodati, the able and pious author of Sermon VIII.

The Rev. A. Thoubon, (see Sermon IX.) is remarkable for his manly and energetic oratory. Educated under the eye of his father, the venerable senior member of the church at Geneva,

it is his good fortune to preside over the same parish in which that esteemed minister passed nearly the whole of his professional life, universally beloved.

With examples such as these, which Providence has not ceased to set before their eyes, it may be easily believed that a deep and salutary impression is perpetuated in the minds of the successive generations, which, by turns, comprise the Genevese national church. Under the silent but effective influence of an internal discipline, which, almost without change or innovation, has been constantly operating upon this establishment from the time of Calvin to the present day, a body so constituted can hardly fail of realizing, for the time to come, those happy auguries which are drawn from a review of its past and present state.

That some diversity of opinion exists with regard to certain points, in this Church, is no more than the history of the human mind would

lead us with certainty to expect; but, brought into continual contact and collision, as all its members must be, from the nature of the establishment in the small state of Geneva, even this circumstance must ultimately prove advantageous to the discovery and promotion of truth.

Incredible as the fact may appear to the English reader, a Genevese clergyman, from the earliest moment of his receiving instruction, to the day of his ordination; and again, should he remain in his native town, from that time to his appointment to his living—nay, even then to the latest period of his life—lives under the most vigilant and rigorous *surveillance* of the body to which he belongs; and knows, to a certainty, that not a single act either of his public or private life passes unobserved or uncontrouled by the tribunal of his peers. The public benefit which accrues from the operation of such a system of superintendance, is incalcu-

lable. In a country, where high-minded and independent persons revolt at the idea of any interference in the transactions of private life, such a system would, no doubt, be branded with the name of an inquisition: nevertheless, it exists at Geneva, in the very bosom of republicanism; whilst the only observable trace of its existence appears in the promotion of the public good, and in the welfare of every individual to whom its operation extends.

For ages, has this salutary system continued to exert its beneficial influence; and for ages, to the honour of the clergy of Geneva be it said, not an individual belonging to it has ever been brought before the civil tribunals of the country.

The admirable discipline of the great Reformer of Geneva, has effectually preserved the hearts of the clergy from secular ambition and jealousies, by reducing the salaries of the ministers to a very moderate common standard; and by subjecting all appointments to equit-

able and invariable rules, known to all, and universally approved. An official meeting of the clergy takes place twice every week, to regulate the internal policy and discipline of the Church, or to discuss matters of more extensive importance, affecting the interests of morality and religion. Besides these regular canonical meetings, another, of a more social description, is held, once a week, in the evening, by rotation, at the houses of the clergy.

Public worship is an object of unremitted attention at Geneva; insomuch, that it may be truly said, not a day passes in the year, on which some church is not thrown open to the population of the city. On the Thursday mornings, throughout the year, a service takes place, the object of which is the familiar exposition of the scriptures. At this interesting duty, every clergyman of the establishment is called to officiate in his turn; and many humble and pious Christians have thus

an opportunity afforded them, of attending a regular and complete course of lectures on the Old and New Testaments. The discourses delivered upon these occasions, are called "*Sermons de Congrégation;*" they are a complete treasury of biblical and critical disquisition, and in general, abound in all the knowledge necessary to salvation. The reader will find an example of this sort of composition, in Sermons V. and VI., from the pen of the Rev. Ph. Mouchon; whose dignity of manner, and purity of style, place him in the first rank of his contemporaries, and render him worthy to continue the reputation of his eloquent and excellent Father.

In no Church do the parochial duties receive an ampler share of daily attention; and the Editor has often seen, with peculiar pleasure, the private *memoranda* of his clerical friends, on the plan of the *Speculum Gregis*, many years before that useful little book was offered to the attention of the English clergy. In fact, such

a manual is indispensable to a Genevese clergyman, every member of the establishment being called upon, at stated periods, to give in a detailed account of the state of the flock entrusted to his care: thus, the clergy have always in their hands a body of information, whence a complete and accurate notion may be formed of the moral and religious condition of the entire population of the State.

From the foregoing data the reader will be enabled to form a judgment for himself—and it can hardly be an unfavourable one—respecting the CLERGY OF GENEVA; and the DISCOURSES brought together in this volume are, the Editor humbly thinks, calculated to confirm that impression: conscientiously attached to the doctrines of the Church of England, and a sincere friend to her venerable establishments, he has long felt an earnest desire to introduce more directly to the notice, and to recommend to the liberal judgment of its members, a clergy, inconsiderable indeed as far as regards numbers, but still a

NATIONAL CLERGY. Should the present volume meet with an encouraging reception, a second may probably follow; for which, materials not less valuable are at the Editor's disposal, consisting, like the present, chiefly of *manuscript* discourses, and mostly on the subject of the *relative social duties.*

One observation more the Editor will allow himself, upon the subject of the established Church at Geneva, for the purpose of pointing out its close and intimate connection with the government of the State, and with every lay member of the university, and learned resident in the republic.

This admirable triple union of the ministers of religion, the rulers of the State, and the eminent teachers in every department of science, identifies in a manner the three great sources of authority; and unites them into one powerful body, capable, at all times, of offering effectual resistance to the attacks of fanaticism, of ignorance, and superstition.

The happy results of such a harmony between civil and religious authority, adorned with the splendours of science and of literature, are well expressed in the following passage of a noble French writer,—M. de Barante, in his "*Littérature Française pendant le dix-huitième Siècle.*" "A miniature republic existed upon the borders of France, speaking the same language, reading the same books, carrying on a daily intercourse with the French metropolis. The same thirst of knowledge, the same zeal for the progress of the human mind, the same disposition to the study of mathematical and natural science, the same general acquaintance with foreign languages; in a word, the same energetic impulse which agitated France during the eighteenth century, was felt, perhaps even more forcibly, in the republic of Geneva; but among a people where a severe morality prevailed, where religion was reverenced, where the influence of the laws was constant and regular, and the simple habits of former ages were yet strong, this im-

pulse did not, as among their neighbours, give rise to a spirit of petulant scepticism, much less attack any of the bonds of society. Their writers never lost their veneration for those principles and institutions which were consecrated by the veneration of past ages—their manner of advancing to every question was still characterized by gravity and moderation; whilst the general tone of society displayed enlightened information, and a lively interest in the cause of letters, tempered with reserve and deliberation in judgment and opinion."

The Editor has only to add, that he trusts the style of the translation, for which he is indebted to the kind assistance of the Rev. R. CATTERMOLE, Secretary to the Royal Society of Literature, will be found worthy of the originals, and of the Public, to whose opinion he now commits his volume.

J. S. PONS.

Kensington Gore,
March 1, 1825.

SERMON I.

ON THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

Cellerier.

SERMON I.

ROMANS V. 1.

Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

WHAT a consolatory declaration, My Brethren, —to "HAVE PEACE WITH GOD!" How sublime and affecting is the sense which these words convey! What happiness! To be permitted to regard the greatest and most perfect of beings in the light of a Father,—to be allowed to draw nigh unto him, and with calm confidence to repose upon his love,—to be allowed to calculate upon his protection,—to be allowed to apply to ourselves that affectionate language which, in Sacred Writ, he addresses to those that believe on him, and those glorious hopes

which he holds out to them;—where is the man in whose bosom thoughts such as these excite no emotion, or who is indifferent to so inestimable a privilege? Peace, to the good man, is dear beyond every other blessing; he esteems it as the chief good, as the indispensable condition of all enjoyment; but, to "HAVE PEACE WITH GOD," is to have it with one's self, with mankind, with all things that live, with the universe; it is to possess all things, to enjoy all things.

Christians! only the religion of Jesus Christ can secure to us this blessed peace. Every act of worship, by exalting and refining our affections, and by approximating us to the Deity, may be said to be the means of our obtaining it: but it is here, at the Lord's table, that it is more peculiarly put within our reach, and that our being enabled to enjoy it is made certain.

Of what importance, then, is it, to ascertain by what means it may be secured! For, you must be sensible that so excellent a benefit cannot be bestowed but upon some condition, nor lavished indiscriminately upon such as

would make no exertion to receive it worthily. There are certain dispositions indispensably necessary to its enjoyment; and those dispositions it is, which are to form the subject of our present discourse. Hear then, My Brethren, with attention and a teachable spirit, and may our meditations, by the divine blessing, prove beneficial to us all!

The dispositions required, in order to "HAVE PEACE WITH GOD," may all be reduced to a single one, viz. Faith:—"BEING JUSTIFIED BY FAITH, WE HAVE PEACE WITH GOD."

This is one of the fundamental truths of our religion. From our childhood we are made familiar with it; from childhood our ears are accustomed to the sacred word, Faith; yet, how rarely do men form any thing like a definite and just idea of its meaning and importance! The greater number of Christians are divided, on this subject, between two erroneous conclusions. Some there are, who, self satisfied, and relying upon a certain character for integrity, and a certain staid moral deportment, deem themselves secure of salvation without any faith

at all; they in a manner exclude it, or, at least, adopt only so much of it as suits their convenience. Others, while they acknowledge the indispensableness of believing, consider faith as no more than a bare mental assent; they are of opinion, that if they subdue their reason to the demands of revealed truth, nothing more is required of them; and soothe themselves with the notion that this docility of the judgment may be substituted for love and obedience, and will of itself suffice to secure their salvation. Thus, the former disregard the necessity of faith; the latter deny its efficacy. To the first class we shall make it appear, that faith alone can procure justification; to the second we will demonstrate, what are the true characteristics of a justifying faith.—Such is the design of this discourse.

I. Since God is a being of infinite holiness, we cannot "HAVE PEACE" with him; there can be "no fellowship" between him and us, except either through justice and innocence, or by pardon and repentance. But the justice

and innocence here required differ widely from that worldly uprightness, which is sufficient, in the intercourse of society, to obtain for a man an honorable reputation. Men's powers are weak and limited; the idea which they form to themselves of moral excellence partakes of the imperfectness of their conceptions and the narrowness of their judgments: they are able to judge, besides, of the external conduct only; and even of that their knowledge is imperfect; their decisions regard one side only of our lives, and that the side which we prepare, if I may so express myself, for show and ostentation. Faults long committed they pass lightly over; and into the estimates of human opinion only the evidence of the present, or of a very recent period is admitted.

Far otherwise the Supreme Judge: The duties of infancy, of youth, of maturity, of old age; the duties of health and of sickness; those which proceed from the various relations of citizen, father, child, wife, brother, friend, neighbour, master, servant; duties which relate to piety, to justice, to charity, to sincerity, to

chastity, to temperance; actions public and private; inclinations, desires, thoughts, nay even words,—the foolish and unweighed expressions which we inconsiderately let fall, as if they melted into the idle air;—all these will form the materials of the Almighty's decision. He does not rest satisfied with the observation of the surface, but looks into the motives of actions; of which the most splendid, if human passions be the principle in which they originated, are in his eyes as nothing, or perhaps even partake of the nature of sin. We delude ourselves respecting our faults, ten thousand ways: He beholds them as they are. Our corrupt nature overlooks them; before Him they stand naked, and are hateful in proportion to his holiness. We commit them almost without observation; He weighs them in his balance: we forget them, we banish them from our remembrance; He remembers them, and inscribes them upon the records of eternity.

Alas! when I think upon these truths, it seems to me that all nature becomes our accuser, and that every emotion of our souls rises

up in judgment against us. "If thou, Lord," exclaimed the Psalmist, when oppressed by a similar feeling, "if thou shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?" "How should a man be just with God?" asked Job; "if He will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand." "There is none righteous," declares St. Paul; "no, not one."—Where, then, is that presumptuous mortal, who, relying upon his own righteousness, shall dare, without shrinking, to approach the judgment-seat of the Most Holy? Be assured, that, extravagant as the pride of man is, there is far more of thoughtlessness than pride, in those whom we see animated by this daring spirit. Let them but examine their own hearts; let them listen to that voice which even now speaks from their conscience; and, struck with fear and confusion, they will confess, that man's salvation can be obtained by divine grace alone.

But, you will, perhaps, ask, are we not entitled to expect that grace, and the pardon which is consequent upon it, through the mercy of our God?

My Brethren, we could have no assurance on this head, unless He himself vouchsafed to afford it to us. In the administration of his providence, justice has her claims, no less than mercy. God himself must speak; it is from him that we must learn not only the mode selected by him for reconciling those claims, and for effecting our reunion with himself, but also the condition upon which this benefit is conceded.

And he has spoken. That mode is the sacrifice offered upon the cross by the great Mediator, the Son of God: that condition is, that we apply to this merciful Redeemer,—it is Faith. Look into the Gospel; there you will find, on every page, that man is justified, not by the merit of works, but by faith; that he is justified, not as human tribunals justify, but after a mode of justification peculiar to infinite goodness. He is not found innocent, but he is restored to the privileges of innocence. What is required of him, is this: that, feeling his own insufficiency, he fix his hope upon Him who dies for the sons of men; that he look to

Him, as the expiring Israelites of old looked to the brazen serpent, lifted up to give them health and healing.

Such is the sole medium of salvation: the language of Scripture is express upon this point.—"God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."—"Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."—"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Thus, My Brethren, no sooner does man come to Christ with sincerity, and with all his soul, than (O divine efficacy of faith!) the merits of Christ veil his transgressions, the righteousness of Christ becomes his righteousness, the immunities of Christ become his immunities; and, identifying himself in his wishes and hopes with his divine Saviour, he henceforth becomes "one" with him. From that time he is in a condition to "HAVE PEACE WITH GOD,"—to have communion with God.

This is that truth which you have never un-

derstood; you, who venture to speak lightly, and almost with scorn, of the Christian Faith. Never having seriously reflected upon this subject, you entertain respecting it no clear and accurate notion. To you the sublime word faith is either a word devoid of meaning, or else you attach to it I know not what vague and mysterious idea, which renders it repulsive to you. Do you now perceive that truth which forms the grand end and object of the Gospel, —that man, redeemed by the great sacrifice offered upon the cross, is saved by faith in the Redeemer? Do you now admit it? Do you feel an incipient conviction that you are guilty, obnoxious to condemnation, and in that state of peril which the Gospel declares? Are you contented to present yourselves before God as sinners unworthy of favour;—to weep at the Saviour's feet with the Magdalen? or do you feel anxious for a mode of reconciliation less humiliating, and not an absolutely free gift? Is that which is pleasing to God, pleasing to you? or do you find within an unconquerable repugnance to submit your will to the divine

will? Oh! be warned! The mercy of Heaven is ready to comply with all your necessities, but not to give way to your prejudices or your pride: these you must either renounce, or else to you also will this complaint of the Saviour be applied: "And ye would not come unto me, that ye might have life!"

What is your reply? Is it too much for God to require of man, that, having neither within nor around him any means of salvation, he accept that mighty one provided for him, and seek for none besides! Is it too much for God, after sending him his Son, and giving up to him that which was most dear to himself, to require that he should become a party to that stupendous sacrifice; that he should consent to avail himself of it; that he should accept, as his sole title to salvation, a gift so costly and so indicative of love? Is it, lastly, too much for God to require of man, whom pride has undone, to renounce that pride with the acceptance of his grace; to strip off his pretended righteousness; to become sensible of what he owes to his Redeemer; to become obedient to him in mind

and will? Ah! at last acquaint yourselves with the faith to which you have done so much injustice, and with your own selves! Look back upon the multitude of your days gone by, of which not one has been unmarked by numberless offences, and so few have been signalized by works that can be truly called good. Descendants of a fallen original, acknowledge how much by your fault you have added to your ancestral guilt. You cannot achieve your own justification: put on, then, that lively faith, by means of which you may attain unto it.

II. You must understand, however, what it is, which that faith requires of you, and what are the sure marks by which it may be known. Here also we, unhappily, labour under an equal delusion; we know as little about the nature of faith, as about its necessity; and they who expect to be saved by its means, are just as ignorant of it, as those who venture to presume that it may be dispensed with. They regard it in the light of a mere belief, like that

which applies to historical fact; at the utmost, as an assent of the reason: in a word, they regard it as an opinion, and not as a vital principle. A fatal error! and often no less pernicious to those who adopt it, than to those who see it persisted in! That it gives a handle to the scoffs of unbelievers, is little; it leads the children of the truth astray from the truth; it suggests to them, that man has only to "continue in sin, that grace may abound;" it leads them to imagine, that he is not made better by faith; thence to conclude that he must come to God barely by works: as if the faith, the justifying faith of Christianity, were not inseparable from works. Oh! if faith did but shine forth among Christians in its genuine lustre—if it were always to be found accompanied by sincere zeal, by elevation of soul, by holiness of life, it would not be thus misunderstood, nor would there be any longer found men desirous to throw off its empire. This was the faith of the early ages of Christianity. To BELIEVE then signified to LOVE, to OBEY. Thus, in order to our participation in the benefits of

redemption, nothing more is required of us in the Gospel, than to believe in Him who hath redeemed us. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Nothing, My Brethren, is more certain, than that the word Faith, in its scriptural import, comprehends every virtue; inasmuch as it is the source whence they all emanate. Doubtless, it includes the acquiescence of the intellect; but it consists, in a still greater degree, of love, and the devotion of the heart. It is the profound conviction of a mind thoroughly conscious of its naturally lost condition, and of Christ's benefits; which "loveth much, because its sins, which are many, are forgiven,"—of one, who, clinging, as his sole hope and only good, to the blessed Saviour, puts his whole being at his disposal, unreservedly resigns himself to him, aspires only to be animated by his spirit, lives no longer but through him and for him; all whose affections are renewed and made conformable with those of his Lord; who, in a

manner, participates in his holiness, and includes his own existence in his. Thus, when the husbandman grafts a feeble branch upon a stem of vigorous growth, it cannot, if the union is complete, remain barren; but, nourished by the same sap which circulates in the tree of which it has become a part, it is clothed with blossom, and crowned with abundant fruit.

Ah! how could the wretch who felt himself on the point of perishing, and whom a saving hand snatches from destruction;—how could the sinner, who has known the horrors of condemnation, but who now beholds the Son of God suffering the penalty due to us;—how could such an one endure, how dare, to offend his benefactor anew! Would not even the very inhabitants of hell, the "spirits reprobate" themselves, were it possible for them to be the objects of so much mercy, be thereby constrained to love and serve Him!

Again, therefore, I repeat it,—and too often re-asserted it cannot be,—true faith consists in a sense of our own deficiencies, and of the blessings obtained for us by our Lord. At

once a motive and a consequence, it suffers not the heart to lie unfruitful and unmoved. It works there as an operative principle, and stimulates it by the most energetic impulses; it strives to exhibit external evidences of its existence, both actively in works, and passively by sacrifices. "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again."

You, then, who lay claim to faith, and yet continue in sin, and live still a sensual life, and give up no habits of criminality, none of your vices, natural or acquired;—you deceive yourselves grievously: yours is not Faith; you love not; for, like the Pharisee, you deem you have no need of pardon; you have never yet felt what you would be without Christ, never conceived what Christ hath suffered for you.

The Christian in whose soul Faith dwells, no longer questions, no longer procrastinates: he is prepared to do every thing, to sacrifice every thing, for the love he bears to his Redeemer.

If, in a word, you loved Him, you would surmount all obstacles; and to complain that this sacrifice is too great, that this effort is too painful, amounts to a confession that you do not love your Saviour as you ought; for, to those who feel that love within, all things are easy.

Now, then, My Brethren, do you conceive the value and the extent of a genuine faith? You have had set before you its surprising efficacy. On God's part, it disarms his vengeance, and propitiates his mercy. From having been obnoxious to his indignation and wrath, it renders us the favoured objects of his pity and his love: through its influence, the lightnings of his anger become the crowns of our immortality. On the part of man, not only does it tranquillize him, console him, and excite in him the most glorious hopes; it inspires him with a new existence. It is of him in whom this faith dwells, that Scripture uses this consolatory language: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin."—Can there be any principle in the world, nobler, greater, or more blessed, than such a faith?

Let us, Christians, make it the object of our wishes; let us exert every endeavour in our power to possess ourselves of it. And thou, O my soul, awake! and recall into thy meditations the death of the Son of God, which we this day commemorate. Now turn thy gaze upon Calvary. What object strikes thee there?—The Prince of Heaven suspended upon the cross, the companion of malefactors. In his adorable countenance, I behold the Divinity veiled by the shadows of death;—his glorious head wears a crown of thorns;—his sacred blood trickles drop by drop;—his feet and hands are pierced through with the nails. Oh, King of Glory! Creator of the thrones and dominions of heaven! is it indeed Thou, whom I behold reduced to this condition of debasement and of woe? Were we but to see a mere man, like ourselves, undergoing a like torture, even were he unknown and unrelated to us, the last and lowest of mankind, we should yearn over him with an emotion of the deepest pity. But this crucified sufferer is no stranger, no unknown person, no criminal: he is not even a mere mortal man:

he is the HOLY ONE, the JUST;—he is our Brother, our Head, our King; he is the Only-begotten Son, in whom the Father is well pleased; before whom the hosts of heaven bow down in adoration!

And wherefore does he thus suffer?—Ah! that recollection, like a sharp arrow, has pierced me to the soul! It is I,—it is my sins that have caused his death: the just sentence of my condemnation is executed upon my unoffending Saviour; and by his stripes and his agonies, I am healed. At length, O Jesus, I embrace Thee; with every faculty of my being I adore Him who dies for me. Too long I have been ungrateful; too long obdurate; now, at last, I feel my soul impressed with a just sense of thy benefits—"I am bought with a price, therefore will I glorify God in my body and in my spirit, which are God's."

Are these, dear Brethren, your sentiments? May God inspire such, or may he strengthen them, and impress them upon our souls by his spirit everlastingly! Of that spirit, this faith,

which at once justifies and regenerates, is a "gift," and the most gracious of them all.

Frail and unhappy creatures, how little can we do by our unassisted strength! Those very things the most calculated to affect us,—our own dangers, our own miseries, and the benevolence which frees us from them, are hardly sufficient to awaken our concern. Yet, if with all our heart we supplicate that Almighty God, who hath promised, that, "if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us,"—that God, who hath already provided help for us unasked, "who hath first loved us, and hath sent his Son, to be the propitiation for our sins;"—if we implore him, in the name and through the merits of that adorable Saviour, he will assuredly help us to fulfil the condition to which he has subjected us; he will endue our souls with the faith which he demands.

O God of Mercies! perfect the work Thou hast begun: "Grant us to be strengthened with might by thy spirit in the inner man, that

Christ may dwell in our hearts BY FAITH!" O Lord Jesus! grant us this day to hear that gracious language, which thou didst address to them that came unto thee for help: "Thy Faith hath saved thee; go in peace!" Enable us thus, "in our patience, to possess our souls," whilst encompassed by the tempests and the sorrows of this life, until that blessed period, when thou wilt bring us to the abodes of peace everlasting, there to be one with Thee for ever. Amen! Amen!

SERMON II.

ON THE INCARNATION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Moulinié.

SERMON II.

JOHN i. 14.

The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

MY Brethren, "THE ONLY BEGOTTEN OF THE FATHER," He who alone came forth from the bosom of the Father,—He who is called "THE WORD," because it was by Him that the Father *spake* to effect the creation of all things; and through whom, when he is pleased to "manifest himself to the world," he *speaks* to the beings whom he has created;—He, who "was in the beginning with God, and who was God," takes upon him our nature, in order to visit earth: What was the purport of this em-

bassage to mankind? For what purpose does the Almighty send the most glorious of that which he hath in heaven, down to what is most forlorn on earth,—his rebellious children? O dispensation inscrutable, which it not only baffles our weak reason to comprehend, but the depth of which even the Angels have hitherto sought in vain to fathom! the Divine, makes himself human,—the Creator, creature,—the Immortal, mortal;—the Lord of all things takes the form of a servant, the Ever Blessed strips himself of his ineffable blessedness. But, omnipotent as he is, he is unable to divest himself of his love. He takes our nature upon him, in order that he may present us with the riches of his mercy, viz. GRACE, which justifies,—TRUTH, which sanctifies,—GLORY, which blesses for ever: And these are precisely the three things, of which, as sinners cut off from the fountain of life, we stand in need.

Assuredly our nature must be of a high order, our destiny a very glorious one, sin exceedingly inimical to our happiness, and our salvation fearfully endangered, for God to have sent us

his own Son, and for Christ to have consented to that painful and protracted sacrifice, which commenced with his existence upon earth. O what love! And, what disinterested love! for it is not for himself that Jesus saves us. His love was the love of a friend, of no less a friend than God himself. He "was made flesh," in order that he might sanctify our nature; he "dwelt among us," in order that he might sanctify our abode; and might teach us how we ought to dwell on earth, and prepare ourselves for our abode in heaven.

How many lessons, My Brethren, and how many encouraging motives, may we hence derive! Let us listen to the Son of God, who brings us peace, and let us remember what he hath suffered, that he might procure it for us: And if Mary received with such profound humility the promise that she should become the mother of the Saviour of Mankind, how much more humble ought we to be!—We, who are better able to estimate the value of the benefit which he was to confer upon us; and in whom, as sinners unworthy of receiving

it, contrition and humility are peculiarly becoming.

I. "Who," our Lord was once asked, "Who can be saved?" "With man," answered he, "it is impossible, but with God all things are possible." And in truth, My Brethren, it is "impossible" for our pollution to be united to the divine holiness; it is "impossible" for us to satisfy the justice of God; it is "impossible" for mortal eyes to endure the sight of his glory; it is "impossible" for us to make good our claims to eternal life: but that God, with whom "all things are possible," has reconciled the claims of his justice, with those of his mercy, by sending his Son, "FULL OF GRACE," in order to purchase for us, and to bestow upon us, the pardon and salvation of our heavenly Father; and the entire life of Jesus Christ is a manifestation and outpouring of mercy and beneficence.

Who among us could presume to say, that he stands not in need of the pardon of God,—of that pardon which procures us an eternal

exemption from those infinite miseries, which must inevitably follow as the consequence of our utter separation from God, the only source of all good? Were we but candid with our own consciences, we should perceive the extent of our corruption,—we should perceive that there is not, perhaps, one of the divine commandments, which we have not violated, either in thought, wish, or intention, either in words, or in express acts of disobedience, with regard to what God has forbidden, or by multiplied neglect of what he has commanded; we should perceive that we have met his benefits with no due return, nor been strict in the observance of our own promises, and most sacred engagements; in a word, we should be struck with the conviction, that our existence is passed in an incessant fluctuation between earth and heaven. And who, then, shall dare to assert his right to heaven, his worthiness to participate in the blessedness of the Divinity!

The farther the Christian advances in the progress of sanctification, (and without humility what sanctification could there be?) the more attentive, likewise, he becomes to the moral

order of Providence; the more convinced, by experience, of his own weakness; the more capable of refinement, and of vigilance, in the discovery of fresh imperfections in himself; insomuch, that, contemplating with terror the extent of that misery, of which he had formed at first so inadequate an idea, he exclaims: "O wretched man that I am! I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin." No man, therefore, can be saved, but by "GRACE;" and as it is Jesus Christ who presents us with that grace,—in which is included the gift of eternal life through the pardon of sin,—so it is he also whose merits have obtained it for us.

He alone is righteous:—He alone has thoroughly fulfilled the task of obedience imposed upon man;—He alone hath shown forth, in all their glory, the divine perfections; and, by bearing in his own person the whole weight of retribution, has diverted and brought upon his own innocent head, the wrath by which we should have been consumed. Christ bears the curse, while we obtain the blessing; "the

chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed:" Christ is crowned with thorns, that we may be crowned with glory; Him reproach covers, that we may be clothed with honour; every pore of his body bleeds, that our bodies may be glorified; in his soul he endures the extremity of desertion and casting off, that ours may be filled with the presence of God; He dies in the midst of tortures, that we may live in the abodes of unmingled blessedness. In Christ, coming full of mercy, to visit us, we see the victim which procures our salvation, and the "GRACE" which ensures our pardon. That which appears, to our feeble reason, derogatory of Christ's greatness, is no derogation from the greatness of his love for us.

How shall we figure to ourselves the Saviour coming down to earth, with a perfect foreknowledge of all that he would have to undergo for the obtaining of our salvation, and not stand struck with admiration before this unparalleled exhibition of mercy and of love? How can we pass a single day without feeling the deepest

humiliation and heartfelt contrition; without dreading to have incurred some secret guilt; without imploring pardon through the merits of Christ Jesus?

Oh, then, sinner! embrace the inestimable mercy which is offered thee; and sue for that "GRACE" without which thou canst not enter into the abodes of heaven! Oh, then, ye torpid souls! take advantage of the time yet allowed you, to excite within yourselves a livelier zeal; nor forget that, while you are asking of the Lord grace and mercy, he calls out to you for repentance, obedience, and zeal. And ye, who are sinking under a sense of guilt, take courage: it is because ye are thus contrite, that the Almighty makes you the offer of forgiveness. When the sinner is thus suffering under a sense of his offences, humbled by the multitude of his temptations, discouraged by frequent relapses, terrified with the consciousness of his condition, how is he consoled by the contemplation of all that his Saviour suffered! When, at the holy table, he hears the Blessed Lord thus address him: "This is my

blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins," how does composure succeed to alarm, and, in the place of sorrow, that calm joy which the children of God experience when reconciled with their Father! Towards this contrite sinner, Jesus shows himself "FULL OF GRACE" and love.—Let us, while we celebrate this first of the benefits of mercy, exclaim with the angels,—"Glory be to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will towards men!"

II. But, My Brethren, shall it be said of us, "They have been forgiven much," because "they have loved much?"—loved with that love which promotes humility, and fervency in prayer and in obedience? That God pardons our sins, does not excuse a vicious life, or a religious indifference, which render us both unworthy and unfit to inherit the kingdom of heaven. When God declares, respecting those who are "lukewarm and neither hot nor cold," that he will cast them off with indignant aversion,—that "without holiness no man shall see

him,"—when he points out to us as inseparable, his "goodness and severity," and that "scarcely shall the just man be saved," how is it possible we can abandon ourselves to a fallacious security? What then, you will ask, shall we do, to prove ourselves worthy of the benefit implied in the covenant of grace? In order that you may learn this, listen to Christ: he comes to teach it you; it is for this that he presents himself to us, "FULL OF TRUTH."

Jesus, "FULL OF TRUTH," is himself the very Truth;—He is Truth itself,—Wisdom herself, "made flesh," in order to be our instructor and our guide. "Through the tender mercy of our God, the dayspring from on high," the sun of the heavenly world, "hath visited us," —discovering to us the road to destruction, that we may be enabled to shun it; and that of heaven, in order to induce us to enter upon, and pursue it, even to the end of our course.

Christ is "TRUTH," he hath come down from heaven, that he might acquaint us with heavenly things;—what a proof of the infallibility of his doctrine! He hath suffered death, that

he might bear witness to the truth:—what an evidence of his veracity, in regard to all that he reveals as proceeding from God himself! Our Saviour's lessons, his most ordinary actions, his miracles, his virtues, his prayers, his sufferings, his death, his triumph;—the powers with which he invests his Apostles,—the promises he makes to his Church,—the merciful invitations which he addresses to his redeemed;—every circumstance relating to him is calculated to recall the sinner, to encourage the believer, and to console the afflicted; because they all tend to inform the understanding, to enliven the heart, to sanctify the will, and to direct man's freedom to its true and only end. Yes, he is "FULL OF TRUTH;" and his Church, the depository of the Gospel, is the school in which we are taught the elements of truth, and are prepared for comprehending things higher still,—to be initiated into angelic mysteries, and to contemplate the Almighty "face to face."

Shall we then persist in preferring darkness to light such as this? Shall we refuse to avail

ourselves of the helps supplied to us in the Holy Scriptures, in public and in private worship, in devotional writings, and in religious discourse? What, shall we rather starve our intellectual appetite, or else feed it upon the vanities of the world,—cultivate the evil already overgrown within us, and wantonly feed the fire of our lusts? But, to feed the fire of lust, is to feed the fire of hell; that fire of which our Saviour hath said, that it "is never quenched," and the flames of which are blackness! Ah, far better to follow Christ, who is the everlasting truth,—truth pure and consolatory! Better to beseech the Saviour to send down his light into our souls, and to inflame our hearts with ardent love for him. May our souls become as a land where he "hath a delight" to dwell,—as so many temples, in which his voice is heard "with power,"—emparadised by the contemplation of his perfections, by the peace and joy which attend upon him, by the virtuous actions which he inspires, and the lofty hopes to which, whilst abiding in us, "the hope of glory," he gives birth.

Go on with constancy, Christian, by the light of the torch of Christ! Then shalt thou perceive the nothingness of all created things, of all which is not God; then shall the world, hell, and thine own heart, cease any more to seduce thee; affliction shall no more cast thee down, death no more alarm thee; nor will the hand of Providence, that guardian power that showers down upon us innumerable blessings, find thee any more heedless of its guidance, or dead to its beneficence. Aye, Christian, march onwards by the light of this torch, with firmness, and with perseverance; and be thankful to heaven, which saves thy soul by affording its light to thy feet.

III. And what reward will they reap, who shall have wisely and profitably employed the "GRACE AND TRUTH" which are in Jesus Christ? Hear, My Brethren, the Saviour himself: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me,—that the love wherewith thou hast loved

me may be in them. And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one." And for the purpose of affording us an idea of the glory which he has obtained for us, and which he asks in our behalf, he calls up, from the midst of that obscurity in which he envelopes himself on earth, a divine light, altogether superior to that of the greatest prophets that had preceded him.

Moses makes his appearance in the house of God, as a servant only; but Jesus appears there, as the only Son of God; for his glory surpasses that of the first of those created intelligencies from among whom the Almighty selects his angels and his ministers. Christ's glory is peculiarly his own; and when he permits a shadow of it to be seen by his disciples, it is because he is willing to admit them to share in it; and when he assigns them a difficult task to fulfil, he encourages them with a foretaste of their reward,—the honour of being endued with supernatural powers, by means of which they are enabled to dictate

laws to nature; to heal the sick, and to reanimate the dead. As they themselves express it, "with open face beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image from glory to glory." All that in Jesus relates to earth, is mean; all that relates to heaven, is glorious.

Christ's advent approaches;—and an angel announces it to the Blessed Virgin destined to be his mother, and to the venerable priest Zacharias, who was the father of his precursor. Christ is born;—and angels, with hymns of mercy resounding through the firmament, proclaim it to the shepherds; and a miraculous star conducts the Magi to the cradle of the Son of God. Being "warned of heaven," Mary and Joseph preserve the life of the divine child. They observe with wonder the unfolding of his wisdom, as the "earthen vessel," in which that matchless treasure is deposited, grows and strengthens; and in the earliest years of Jesus, they contemplate the dawn of his resplendent day.

The Saviour is about to enter upon his earthly mission;—and on the banks of Jordan, his precursor, by divine inspiration, recognises him, in the sight of many persons assembled there, for "the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world;" whilst, in order to solemnize his inauguration, heaven opens, the Holy Ghost descends upon his head, and the voice of his Father proclaims: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Having vanquished the tempter in the wilderness, angels approach to minister unto him, and presently nature itself is seen obedient to his word: he speaks, and the sick are healed, the dead restored to life, demons are expelled, the wrathful wind and the raging sea subside into peace. He shows himself to three of his disciples upon Mount Tabor, transformed, and shining in such a shape of brightness, as made them proclaim, that they "had seen his glory." Again, on the eve of his crucifixion, a voice was heard "from heaven, saying, I have both glorified my name" in thee, "and will glorify it."

Nor is the accomplishment of this promise delayed: He expires, indeed, amidst shames and tortures; but, in the quaking of the earth, the rending of the rocks, the bursting of the sepulchre, the rising of the dead and their entering into "the Holy City," and the veiling of the sun in darkness,—all nature glorifies its Lord, whom ungrateful men conspire to outrage.

And with what still brighter glory is Jesus crowned, when he issues, clothed in light, from the tomb, ascends majestically to heaven, sends down the Holy Spirit upon his Apostles, appears seated at the right hand of his Father, surrounded by the divine Majesty, made Lord of the angels, and an object of adoration to the blessed; who, while they proclaim him "the faithful," "the true," "the word of God," and blend his worship with the worship of God the Father, are heard saying: "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever!"

Such were the things which the Apostles witnessed, and, in various degrees, others also

of Christ's disciples—"more than five hundred brethren," as we are told by St. Paul; of whom one, the intimate friend of the Apostle St. John, who had himself seen Christ after his resurrection, speaking of this subject, wrote thus to one of the churches of Asia: "Why may I not speak to you of heavenly things? But, babes as you are, I fear to do you harm. Forgive the silence, which proceeds from an apprehension, lest, unable to bear these things, you be overwhelmed by them." Such are the expressions of a second St. Paul; who, after being "caught up into the third heaven," declares that he has seen things such as it is not permitted to him to utter.

We also, My Brethren, shall behold the glory of "THE ONLY-BEGOTTEN OF THE FATHER," when we shall become men, for at present we are but "babes;" when we shall become Christians, for as yet we are but sinners: we shall see it, by being partakers in it; we shall see it when, after the completion of the work of "GRACE AND TRUTH," Jesus Christ shall transform our "vile" and abject bodies into the likeness of

"his glorious body." Such, then, is the destiny promised to us; the blessed goal at which will terminate the sorrows of repentance, the efforts of zeal, the sighs of contrite humility, the sacrifices of charity and self-denial, the pains of martyrdom,—all the active evidences, in a word, of a genuine faith. And, even here below, how many pledges are afforded us of all these divine blessings.—O, glory of the Christian! Christ's most immediate disciples have come into the possession of the first fruits of this everlasting heritage: O, glory of the Christian! the lives of the first believers were rich and radiant with every hallowed virtue: O, glory of the Christian! Christ's sincere disciple may be seen, even in this life, adorned with "GRACE AND TRUTH:" O, glory of the Christian! he, during so many ages, has drawn yearly from the fountain of our evangelic festivals living waters inexhaustible: O, glory of the Christian! he is spreading abroad, even now, the word of life unto the ends of the earth, and thereby preparing other children for God, for Christ other worshippers.

Oh, how is the soul impressed, at thoughts like these, with a consciousness of her own dignity! how does faith increase in vital energy, and confidence grow in firmness! until we feel the assurance of St. Peter, that "the trial of our faith shall be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Nay more: "Having not seen Christ," how do we yet feel we "love" him! How, "though even now we see him not," yet, believing, we "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of our faith,"—that faith which is the mother of earnest zeal, and the nurse of every virtue, "in the salvation of our souls!"

My Brethren, there is but one mode in which we can truly glorify God, who hath given his Son for us; and that is, by being Christians. But who is he, who may be truly called a Christian? It is he who, acknowledging his unworthiness and his manifold errors, flies to the "GRACE" of his Saviour, and applies to his progress in sanctification the "TRUTH" whose

light the Saviour causes to shine out before his eyes. In the estimation of the true Christian, God's love to him is paramount to every other object. He shuns, with the utmost aversion, every thing which can enfeeble his faith, or prove injurious to his virtue; roots out every evil propensity; and, never allowing himself to be diverted by the current of the world, keeps his eye steadily and exclusively fixed on the end in view. That which he devotes to his Saviour, is far more than all that remains, of his time, of his affections, of his faculties: it is his entire being. He is spared the torment of passion and the remorse of sin; he abandons neither his true interests, nor the cause of the Gospel; he defers not, till it is too late, self-knowledge and self-correction; he deems all love unworthy of him, but the love of righteousness. "It was for me," he saith to himself, "that Christ evinced so much love,—for me he suffered: Oh, how shall I forbear to glorify him in life and death? How forbear to make his love known, his sacrifice appreciated, his Gospel delighted in? How forbear to concur in the

promotion of the design for which he came to visit me, or to follow in his footsteps?"

"THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH;" nor did he ever utter an unholy expression, or one unworthy of the Deity. Let us apply this lesson in our own discourses,—never to let fall a word injurious to faith, to piety, to humility, to charity, to justice, to purity; never for the purpose of lying, or for disseminating discord or vice; never with the view of seducing others; never for the purpose of taking the Lord's name in vain; but always in order to glorify God, always to promote the good, temporal and spiritual, of our fellow-creatures: such is our duty.

"THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH."—Jesus, that he might extricate us from our misery, came to share it with us. Let us take this for a lesson of charity and brotherly tenderness: let us learn to share in the difficulties, the privations, the sufferings, and the dangers of our brethren. Not satisfied with sending them proofs of our beneficence, let us for a time leave our habitations, where comfort and elegance reign, in order to visit the sick and indi-

gent in their mournful retreats, carrying, wherever we go, the charity which aids, and the truth which consoles; and thus let us distinguish this great festival, and every day of our lives, by exhibiting to the view of our suffering brethren, the image of God our Saviour, in which consists the glory of the Gospel. And let us at the same time not forget, while we are careful to guard against despising the poor, the menial, the weak, and the ignorant, that the piety of the poor sufferer, who prays to God for his benefactors, is a more grateful offering to heaven than all the easy virtues of prosperity.

"THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH."—He who was "in the form of God, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death," for our salvation. In this, we have a lesson of humility and self-denial. He humbled himself: shall we be always striving to be exalted? He became poor: must we of necessity be rich? He lived in obscurity and neglect: cannot we dispense with men's honours, esteem, and regard? He voluntarily subjected himself to suffering: must we every day enjoy our pleasures, our luxuries,

our feasts? Alas! are we following Christ, when humiliation offends us, when a single privation drives us to despair, when a trivial disappointment irritates us, when a retired life wearies us and we can live only for the world, when temptation renders us cruel or unjust;—when, in fine, we submit, for the sake of our passions, our caprices, and our worldly interests, to sacrifices which we should refuse to make to our duty and to heaven? Where, in this case, is the resemblance to Christ in us? Where, when we suffer our affections to be entangled with earthly things, and we have cause to blush on account of the little care we take to encourage holy dispositions,—where is our preparation for heaven? where are the evidences of our treading in the path marked out for us by Christ?

And yet, who could concentrate his meditations upon the life of his Saviour, and upon what we owe to his sufferings and his instructions, and not feel his heart expand with glowing and tender emotions, his mind exalted and enlarged, his ardour awakened, his affections purified, his

turbulence of passion quelled? Who could help becoming better, or, at least, refrain from forming solemn resolutions of amendment, and from labouring with incessant assiduity to realize them? Thus wise is man, when he gives himself up to the divine guidance! Thus exalted is the Christian, when he falls prostrate at the feet of Jesus, adores, and obeys! Oh, let us exclaim with the Apostle, — and may these words be found applicable to all who hear me:— "Grace be with them that love our Lord Jesus in sincerity;" who love him that they may serve and glorify him, that they may purify their hearts with zeal for his service, and gratitude for his benefits, that they may cause him to dwell in and round about them!

And, I will also say, "Grace be with all them" who have never learned to love the Lord Jesus. May it abide with them, that they may obtain mercy, and that it may sanctify their souls; that so faith may succeed in them to unbelief,—zeal to indifference,—the love of God to the love of the world and of themselves! May their very sins be the means of opening

their eyes, and of making them sensible that men's passions are tyrants as perfidious as they are merciless, and that Christ is a dear and faithful friend, who alone will not leave nor forsake them at the brink of the grave,—no, nor beyond the grave!

Adorable Saviour! "Only-begotten Son of God!" blessed be thou for all that thou hast done and suffered, in order to enable us to become yet again his dear children! From that heavenly abode, whither thou didst reascend after thy great sacrifice, thou hast continued ever to be unto us "THE WORD" of salvation, by speaking to our hearts, and calling us to life and happiness. With what earnest longing dost thou wait to receive us into thy paradise; where there is no strife, because there God alone reigns; no darkness, because nothing intercepts thy light; no misery nor death, because it is the abode of that life, which is life indeed! Happy the man who, after having quitted this life of trial, and in all his being become united to Thee, enters upon a life of glory, and feels his eyes opening upon the

transporting light of heaven! And happy the light of that eternal day, in which we shall contemplate the full completion of the work of our salvation through thy blood! With what raptures shall we then bless the FATHER, who hath loved us with so much love,—the SON, who hath redeemed us,—the HOLY GHOST, who hath renewed our nature, and changed us into glorified creatures! How unlike such raptures to those transient flashes of zeal, in which, here on earth, we devote ourselves to thee, and then instantly fly off in pursuit of some pleasure of this world. How often, alas! have we promised to be thine, and thine alone; whilst, almost as often, O loving Saviour, we have forgotten and offended thee! Put an end to this criminal inconstancy; and enable us to apply all our powers and our will to choose what is good, and to do what is good, and to serve thee truly now and for ever! Amen!

SERMON III.

THE NATURE AND NECESSITY OF REPENTANCE.

Gaussen.

Note.—*In the original, the third and fourth Discourses form but one; which, on account of its unusual, and (in relation to the rest of those selected for the present volume) its disproportionate length, the Editor has taken the liberty to divide in two, without, he trusts, any injury to the effect of the whole.*

SERMON III.

Luke xiii. 1—5.

There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things?

I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?

I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.

A PREACHER remarkable for a truly christian energy and for a persuasive tenderness of manner, being asked what was the feeling which predominated in his mind, whilst his imploring voice and his affectionate language penetrated

every soul with an emotion so deep and so devout, replied, that he never ascended the pulpit without this pathetic idea: "Perhaps there may be, in this temple, one who is about to hear, for the first time, the Gospel of Christ; perhaps, also, there is one who is now to hear it for the last time." Oh, how effectually, My Brethren, would not the hearers of the Word receive it, did they never enter into our places of worship but with this thought: "Perhaps the Word of life will be this day proclaimed to me, as it were, for the first time;—it may be, also, that I am destined now to hear it for the last time! But, am I not told that this Word is the very voice of my God, that it is those 'Good Tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people?'—And yet I have hitherto received it with so much coldness! Am I not told, that it is 'a weapon mighty, through God, to the bringing into captivity of every thought to the obedience of Christ?' And yet it has produced, hitherto, so little impression upon my heart; and still I remain unchanged during so many years, that I am in the habit of reading it in the

Holy Bible, and of hearing it preached! Perhaps, therefore, I have never yet well understood the spirit of it; perhaps, alas, I am of that unhappy number, spoken of by our Lord in the Parable of the Sower, who receive his word without effect, because they have heard it without comprehending it:—then, it may be, that this day it will be addressed to me, in an effectual manner, for the first time."

But, above all, My Brethren, above all, with how much efficacy would the hearers of the word receive it, could they but say to themselves: "To-day, perhaps, for the last time, I hear the invitations of the Gospel, and the voice of God my Saviour. Soon, for me, will the scenes of this life of trial have all passed away, like the spectacle of an hour, and like a morning dream. Time flies on; the hours cease not to strike; eternity advances; the Lord is at hand! Ah, therefore, now is, for me, the acceptable time; now, therefore, is the day of salvation."

Hear then, My Brethren, hear with these dispositions, the word which the Saviour of the

world again addresses to you this day; and impress upon yourselves, that, if ever there was a subject to which you were bound to listen with the pious self-collectedness of a spirit which communes with itself, and which contemplates eternity, it is, assuredly, that which the text of this day presents to you.

These words were spoken by our Saviour at the close of a long discourse, in which he had urged the necessity of turning to profit, for the purpose of repentance, the uncertain and fleeting time during which the word of salvation is preached to us; and as, then, several persons present at this exhortation instanced to him, in confirmation of his discourse, the sudden end of certain Galileans put to death by order of Pilate, "Suppose you," said he to them, "that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans? I tell you, nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Such is the important subject proposed for our instruction this day.

After having, therefore, briefly set before you

the particulars accessory to our text, we shall proceed immediately to the important lesson which is there offered to us. And, with this view, calling your attention, in the first place, to the question: "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans?" we shall show you, THAT YOU ALL STAND IN NEED OF REPENTANCE:—Secondly, in reply to the question: WHAT IS IT TO REPENT? we will entreat you to ask yourselves, whether you have already repented:—And lastly, by way of reply to this final inquiry: WHAT ARE THE MEANS OF REPENTANCE? we will point out to you, that the repentance of each of you is in your own power.—

Oh, thou Word of God, merciful voice of my Saviour, Word "mighty to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God," come, shed thy influence upon our consciences,—come, address every heart here present! May we all listen to thee, with the humility of little children, with the attention of immortal beings; even as though

we were hearing thee upon our death-bed, at the approach of our last hour, at the dawn of the day of Christ!

Lord, Lord Jesus! that art "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," do thou therefore speak to all these thy people; enable us plainly to declare to them "the word of God, as of God, in the sight of God, and in Christ;" be with us, and put into our souls, as well as on our lips, the simplicity of a heart devoted to thy love, which seeks after Thee, and seeks Thee only! Amen.

When our Lord uttered the solemn declaration which is now to form the subject of our meditations, he was surrounded by a great multitude, "insomuch," says the Evangelist, "that they trode one upon another." He had been addressing to them the most earnest exhortations to watch over the condition of their souls before God, while there was yet time, while it was yet day. "Let your loins be girded about," said he to them, "and your lamps burning; and ye yourselves like unto

men that wait for their Lord, that they may open unto him immediately.—Ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth: but how is it that ye do not discern this time?—When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite." That is to say: "Oh, immortal souls, why discern ye not the time of the patient waiting and invitation of a Redeeming God? You have an 'adversary;' and that adversary is the God whom you have so deeply offended: you are in 'the way' to the judgment-seat of Christ; and that way is your brief existence: Whilst, then, you are yet in the way, 'give diligence that you may be delivered from him,' lest you arrive 'before the Judge' eternal, without surety, without remission of sins, without reconcilement, without a Saviour."

"THERE WERE PRESENT AT THAT SEASON," our text relates, "SOME THAT TOLD HIM OF THE GALILEANS, WHOSE BLOOD PILATE HAD MINGLED WITH THEIR SACRIFICES;"—either with the intention of confirming the great lesson, which they had just heard from their Lord, by adducing to him the fatal example of those unhappy persons, thus brought before their judge at the moment when, doubtless, they imagined that the way of life was to be lengthened out a long time yet for them;—or else, wholly preoccupied with an event which had lately excited in Jerusalem universal indignation, they were desirous of ascertaining what sentence the Lord had passed upon these Galileans, and upon the odious governor, who, for five years, had made Judea groan beneath the weight of his extortions and his cruelties.

We can only form conjectures respecting the motive, which could induce Pilate thus to profane the public worship, and the holy places consecrated to religion, by a murder, which, moreover, but too closely resembles some

other acts of his authority previously known. Haughty, always in arms, and ambitious of independence, the Galileans lived under the dominion of Herod Antipas, and were but indirectly subject to the Roman authority; but at the yearly return of the solemnities of the Passover and of Pentecost, they assembled together by thousands at Jerusalem, in order to join the rest of the Jews, who, from the extremity of the East, and out of every province of the empire, came there to the celebration of those festivals. It is therefore very possible, that those here spoken of had provoked the rage of Pilate by the use of some rash and seditious expressions. Less than this, however, would have sufficed to urge on to the most cruel excesses this fierce and zealous soldier, who hated both them and their king; and who was always ready enough at shedding blood.

Alas, there is the blood of ANOTHER, which, at the last day, will cry out yet louder against this iniquitous and cruel ruler.—The year following was to obtain for Pontius Pilate the fatal distinction of an immortal infamy. At the

next Passover he was to deliver up to death the Prince of Life, in spite of the voice of his conscience and the warnings of heaven; and, thus consummating the great sacrifice, which, during fifteen hundred years, the Passover had prefigured, to destroy the Temple of God in the person of the Messiah, and to shed the blood of the everlasting covenant.

In the mean time, another catastrophe, less tragic but not less fatal, had just furnished Jerusalem with yet a new lesson upon the necessity of calling herself, without delay, to an account for the things done in her.

The brook of Siloë, to the south-east of Jerusalem, ran out of the hill of Sion, at the termination of the deep valley which separated the city of David from the mountain of Acra, upon which the lower town was built. The waters of this spring, which, according to St. Jerome, was the only one whence Jerusalem could be supplied, after escaping from the city, ran along for some distance by its walls, and thence crossing some pleasant gardens and groves, poured their limpid waves

into the torrent of Cedron. Now, it had lately happened, that a tower, erected in the vicinity of this stream, probably upon the wall which was carried round for the defence of Jerusalem, had fallen down suddenly; and eighteen persons had perished under its ruins.

These two melancholy events, and in particular the former, occupied at that time the public attention at Jerusalem, and were most likely the general subject of conversation in that capital. People discussed the causes which led to them; they repeated all the particulars, from mouth to mouth; they took up various opinions, respecting the wrongs of the one set of sufferers, and the misfortune of the other; instead of confessing that all such calamities, which the Providence of God calls us to witness, are so many silent but eloquent appeals in which it is his pleasure to address us,—so many striking lessons which a long-suffering God is pleased to afford one part of mankind in the sufferings of others.

Alas, while "the Prince of Life," dwelling among men, and traversing their towns and

countries, had, during thirty months, been calling lost sinners about him,—whilst his affectionate voice was beseeching them to repent,—even then, as at this day, the current of secular events absorbed the universal attention.

So it ever is!—Men, alas! occupy themselves with the things of life, only to forget the end of life; with the death of their fellow-creatures, only to forget their own which is drawing nigh; and with the judgments which God displays here on earth before our eyes, only to forget the judgments eternal, and the tribunal of Christ. And whilst the stream of time bears onward our frail bark, with so rapid a course, towards the ocean of eternity, the succession of fugitive scenes which its banks present by turns to our observation,—that very succession which ought in so impressive a manner to remind us with what rapidity we glide through life,—is the cause of our forgetting that "we are strangers with God, and sojourners, as all our fathers were;"—that we are "in the way" to "the magistrate;"—that it

behoves us to repent;—that we bear an immortal soul which we must save.

Frequently, we even persuade ourselves that we are religiously employed about divine things, because we attach much interest to the purely external circumstances which belong to the kingdom of heaven. We take praise to ourselves for having exercised our curiosity upon the plots of Caiphas, of Herod, or of Pilate; without, however, having thence taken occasion to draw nigh to God, to commune with our own hearts, and ourselves, to take account of our lives.

This was, doubtless, the idea of those persons, who, in order to make it appear to our Lord how great an interest they took in the temple, in the divine service, in their Galilean brethren, related to him what had occurred to those foreign worshippers, whose blood Pilate had shed with that of their victims, in the consecrated courts whither their devotion had conducted them.

But observe well here, My Brethren, our Lord's answer: it will instruct you how we

ought to apply to ourselves those judgments which his Providence sets before our eyes for our admonition.

"SUPPOSE YE," he replies, "THAT THESE GALILEANS WERE SINNERS ABOVE ALL THE GALILEANS, BECAUSE THEY SUFFERED SUCH THINGS? I TELL YOU, NAY: BUT, EXCEPT YE REPENT, YE SHALL ALL LIKEWISE PERISH." And immediately afterwards, lest those who heard him should fail to take in the full meaning of this declaration, or might conceive that it implied an exclusive condemnation of the inhabitants of Galilee, our Lord looks out for a fresh illustration within the very circuit of Jerusalem:—"OR THOSE EIGHTEEN UPON WHOM THE TOWER IN SALOAM FELL, AND SLEW THEM, THINK YE THAT THEY WERE SINNERS," —(in the Greek it is "debtors," alluding, no doubt, to the parable which precedes our text,) —"THINK YE THAT THEY WERE SINNERS ABOVE ALL MEN THAT DWELT IN JERUSALEM? I TELL YOU, NAY: BUT, EXCEPT YE REPENT, YE SHALL ALL LIKEWISE PERISH."

As if he had said to them: "You instance

to me, as tending to second my urgent exhortations, the sudden fate of those unhappy persons whom Pilate's sword hath abruptly cut off from life, and sent, unawares, to appear in the presence of the eternal Judge; your minds are wholly taken up by this act of atrocity; perhaps even the harsh party spirit which animates you against these sons of Israel, born under a different government and in a different clime from your own, leads you to regard their extermination rather as a just judgment of God than as a martyrdom: But, I tell you again, have regard to yourselves; think seriously of your repentance; and look upon events such as these in the light of warnings from above, calculated to engage you earnestly in the work of salvation. Do not imagine, that 'these Galileans, or those eighteen, were sinners above all the Galileans, above all the dwellers in Jerusalem:—I tell you, nay:' you all are sinners, all guilty; you all need to be converted; and ye yourselves who hear me, I have not ceased to declare to you, that, 'UNLESS YE REPENT, YE SHALL ALL LIKEWISE PERISH;' and in the

same manner as they perished for ever, as to this world, shall ye perish for ever, as to the world to come. Place, therefore, less confidence in the mere name of Jews; for I make known to you, that 'he is not a Jew which is one outwardly;' and that 'verily, verily, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'"—

O, my soul!—do thou, therefore, become serious and thoughtful whilst thou art contemplating the dispensations of thy God;—and, whilst the children of this world, absorbed by the din of society, and by the turmoil of earthly things, turn their attention to those dispensations, only for the sake of deriving from them a passing amusement, or of forming harsh and hasty, or, at the best, vain conclusions, respecting the instruments or the victims of them,—do thou, my soul, for thy part, call up thy profoundest thoughts in the presence of thy God, and enter upon a severe and solemn self-examination. Think that the word of Christ is this day preached in Jerusalem; turn thy thoughts to eternity, and begin by judging

thine own self. Art thou prepared?—Thou hast just witnessed beside thee some awful stroke of the Almighty;—a violent and sudden death,—the untimely loss of a being tenderly beloved, who has just been called away from life, at the period of hope and of confidence;—groans now burst from that dwelling where yesterday were heard but the sweet accents of homefelt joy. At this calamity some weep; others are terrified; it absorbs the minds of all.—And thou, my soul, hast thou prepared thy reckoning? Had I myself been found this morning lifeless,—Oh, my soul, wert thou prepared?—Thou art upon the brink of eternity; thou art but a few days from the day of Christ; there is but a breath—but a breath!—between thee and the tremendous scenes of futurity. Hast thou repented? Is all ready? Art thou prepared to meet thy God? If my sin is forgiven me, all is well; but, if I am yet in my sins, all is ill: and nothing should be allowed to call off my thoughts until I have rendered my hopes secure, and made the Saviour mine.

Let us therefore, now, My Brethren, give all our attention to this important and affecting declaration, which our Lord this day calls upon us to meditate: "UNLESS YE REPENT, YE SHALL ALL LIKEWISE PERISH."

Some commentators, giving a particular emphasis to this last expression, have thought they perceived, in this threatening of our Saviour, a prophetic allusion to the approaching destruction of Jerusalem; and to the manner in which the inhabitants of that rebellious city were destined, thirty-eight years afterwards, "to mingle their blood with their sacrifices," and to be destroyed at once by the sword of the Romans, and under the ruins of their demolished ramparts.

We see no reason for rejecting this idea; and we willingly admit, that this declaration of our Saviour, at the same time that it bore a particular reference to a future judgment, might also have regard to those temporal judgments which he was shortly about to bring upon the Jewish people.

But, let us look farther; and not lose in

critical researches, the precious time which we ought to employ to our edification.

A solemn appeal speaks to our souls; from the ruins of Siloë, and the blood of the Galileans, a voice proceeds, which cries: Repent ye! Our Lord calls upon us this day, to meditate the most important truth,—the fundamental truth,—of our religion.

I. In fact, My Brethren,—and we beg of you to be attentive to this observation—the assertion of the text applies generally. It addresses itself to each of you who are here present, as it addressed itself, eighteen hundred years ago, to the men of Jerusalem,—as, a hundred years hence, it will address itself to your children's children: all need repentance. Do not imagine "that these Galileans, or those eighteen, were sinners above all the Galileans, or all the inhabitants of Jerusalem;" do not, either, imagine, My Brethren, that ALL the inhabitants of Galilee, or that ALL the inhabitants of Jerusalem, were sinners above all the inhabitants of our country, of our time, or of our city:

"NAY," upon the authority of our Lord, "I TELL YE, NAY:" We must ALL OF US REPENT.

Repentance, then, is not a duty which concerns either the heathen only, or those abandoned men, whom the world censures, and public opinion condemns. Throughout all Galilee, throughout all Jerusalem, every child of Adam must repent or must die: all stand in need of repentance.

Such is, doubtless, the meaning of our Lord in the text; but such is likewise the doctrine of every page of the Holy Scriptures; such is the doctrine that God has never ceased to declare to his people, from the earliest ages of the world; and it is still the doctrine which he commands his ministers to "preach among all nations, and to every creature, even unto the end of the world."

Prophets, apostles, evangelists,—all affirm that every child of Adam, circumcised or uncircumcised, baptized or unbaptized, before he can become an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, must have experienced, in his habits, in his character, in his affections, and in his habi-

tual mode of thinking, a change; which Scripture calls, indifferently, "Repentance,—Regeneration,—Renewing of the Holy Ghost,—New Birth,—Renewing of the mind;" and which it characterizes by the strongest expressions which human language can furnish.—It declares to us, that we are not by nature in a fit condition for the kingdom of heaven; that we are all by nature miserable sinners, born in corruption, prone to evil, unable of ourselves to do good; that we thus, by the just judgment of God, draw down upon ourselves condemnation and death; that it concerns us, not that we should not lose ourselves, (we *are* lost!) but, to save ourselves; that Jesus is called Jesus, for no other reason but because he is come "to seek and to save that which is lost;" that all Galilee lieth in guilt; that all Jerusalem lieth in guilt; and that "UNLESS WE REPENT, WE SHALL ALL LIKEWISE PERISH."

Such is the sentence of the eternal Word; but such also, My Brethren, is the sentence which a world at enmity with God was never

willing to hear. It is against these declarations of the God of love, who "hath no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but rather that he turn from his way and live,"—it is against these declarations, humiliating, no doubt, but salutary, that the enemy of our souls has at all times most earnestly endeavoured to excite to rebellion the pride of mankind; "lest," as our Lord saith, "they should believe and be saved." No sooner had our first parent received from God this express decree: "In the day that thou" violatest this commandment, "thou shalt surely die," than Satan, eager for his ruin, began to say to him: "Thou shalt not surely die."—And so it is still, that, ever since the fall, whilst God proclaims in his Word, that "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin," and that "UNLESS WE REPENT WE SHALL PERISH," the enemy insinuates to us: "Ye shall not surely die."—Whilst God assures us in his Word, that we are all "debtors," all "sinful," all "the children of wrath even as others;" but that Jesus hath appeared, to "deliver us from the wrath to

come," and "to save that which was lost;" the enemy labours to persuade us, that we are not exposed to "wrath," that we are not "lost," and that we are not in need of "REPENTANCE."—Whilst God cries out to us in his Word: "Let them be at peace with me! Let them be at peace with me!" the enemy says: "Peace and safety; Peace, Peace," when there is no peace.—"They have belied the Lord," saith Jeremiah, "and have said, It is not he, neither shall evil come upon us."

But, what need to dwell upon the proof of a truth which runs through every fundamental truth of our religion; and which is proclaimed to us in its turn by every page of our sacred Book, from Genesis to the final Revelations of the Apostle St. John?

ALL MUST REPENT: that is the whole subject of the preaching of our Lord, of his prophets before him, of his apostles after him.—"No man can enter into the kingdom of God, except he be born again:" such is our Lord's first address to Nicodemus: and when the latter marvels at a doctrine which is every where

apparent in the Old Testament, our Lord replies to him: "Art thou a master in Israel, and knowest not these things?"—"I send thee to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me:" Such is the substance of the commission of Christ's ministers.—"Now God commandeth "all men every where to repent:" Such was the tenour of the Apostle Paul's preaching in the city of Athens.—"In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature:" Such is the Apostle's declaration to the Galatians.—"For there is no difference," he says again, since "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; since "every mouth ought to be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God;" since "there is none righteous, no, not one," and, "we are all by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

We must "REPENT;" we must be "born again;" we must be "circumcised in heart;"

we must be "quickened," and "pass from death unto life;" we must "make us a new heart and a new spirit;" we must be "renewed by the Holy Spirit," and "transformed by the renewing of our mind;" we must "put off the old man, and put on the new man;" we must be "turned from the power of Satan unto God;" we must become "new creatures," pass through a "new creation;" and, in the words of the text: "UNLESS YE REPENT, YE SHALL ALL LIKEWISE PERISH."

Now, then, I turn to you who hear me, and I implore you all, to compare these declarations, so express, of the eternal Word of God, with what has passed in your bosoms, since you have heard the preaching of the Gospel. I implore you to consider, how very vain and frivolous, by the side of declarations such as these, appear the notions which so many persons among us form for themselves, respecting religion, the conversion of the heart, and their Christian service:—certain external formalities, certain religious observances, in which the heart feels not and speaks not; certain

cold and languid performances of an ever feeble devotion, certain vague projects of future repentance, rather than hearty resolutions and sincere endeavours.—Ah! what in common have these empty seemings, this sickly glow of devotion, these dreary shadows of piety, with what Scripture tells us of an efficacious repentance, when she represents it as the deliverance from a state of death, as the passing from the power of Satan to God, as a resurrection, as a being born again? Oh, then, I implore you once more to ask yourselves, while yet there is time, with earnest solicitude, whether you would be led by the various cares, the various honours, the many delights of a world, which, after all, is but "a fashion that passeth away," should it be found, at the last day, that you are not of Christ's flock, that "your heart is not right in the sight of God," that you "are yet in the bond of iniquity," and that, to speak the language of Scripture, you have "neither part nor lot, in this matter?"

words: Go, my son; "thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

Go to him, then—go to him as you are, freely and without distrust, remembering that he invites unto him "all those who are weary and heavy laden;" remembering that what he commands you in his Word, he will obtain for you by his Spirit, he has purchased for you by his blood; and that himself hath said: "He that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." Go therefore to him, exclaiming with your whole heart, in the words of David: "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord: If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared:"—Aye, forgiveness, that thou mayest be feared!—I come then to thee, O my God, "poor, miserable, blind, and naked," with no other offering than the confession of my unworthiness, with no other claim to thy mercies but my misery and thy promises. "Purge me, O God, with hyssop," and the blood of the Tabernacle, "and I shall be clean: Create in me a clean

heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."

If, My Brethren, you do these things, if you thus draw nigh to the Saviour, I am authorized to affirm to you, upon the word of God, "who cannot lie," that, assuredly you will find peace, assuredly your prayers will be heard, assuredly you will repent, assuredly you will be saved.

Herein trust the Word of God, herein trust the believers of every age and nation. These are the sole means which wrought the repentance and salvation of the sanguinary Saul of Tarsus, the sinful Mary, and the unjust publican Zaccheus. These are the sole means which have wrought the repentance and justification of believers of our own days; who will all tell you, with the Apostle Paul: "This is a faithful saying, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me Jesus Christ might show forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on Him, to life everlasting."

Then will the Saviour fulfil for you his two-fold promise,—the remission of your sins, and the conversion of your soul. Then will the spectacle of Jesus, dying for you with tortures at which humanity shudders, and amidst the anguish of the second death,—that spectacle unfolded to your view by the Holy Spirit,—suggest to you feelings and convictions respecting the enormity of sin and the goodness of God, compared with which every discourse of the most eloquent human wisdom, respecting vice and virtue, will appear to you no more than "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."—Then, in like manner as the earth, when the warmth of the sun returns after a protracted winter, feels the melting of the ice which held it bound in the fetters of sterility and death, will your spirit, when once it shall have beheld Jesus "the sun of righteousness, with healing in his wings," drink in, together with the light of faith, the warmth, the peace, the joy, the spring-time of a new existence, causing it to be renewed in youth and freshness, to the glory of its God.—Then you will daily become more

like your Saviour, "meek and lowly of heart;" you will "put off all anger, wrath, malice, evil concupiscence;" you will "put off the old man with his deeds," and will put on, as the "elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, long suffering; and the peace of God" will "rule in your hearts."

O, "good tidings!" O, tidings how joyful to the heart of a sinner conscious of his wretchedness, and in search of peace! O my soul, drink in long draughts of these living waters of heaven, whose refreshing is unto eternal life!—Is not, My Brethren, is not this Gospel,—are not those good tidings indeed a subject of great joy to your exhausted souls?

Ours is a Saviour "mighty to save." Let us not then refuse to go to him! Wretched sinners, wretched mortals, wretched worms as we are, on the brink of eternity, "to whom should we go?" Hath not he alone "the words of eternal life?" It is such a joy, it is such a bliss, to resign one's self to Christ!—It is so delightful a thing, even in the midst of tears, even in exile, even under the darkest

cloud of woe, even in the house of mourning, even on the bed of death;—it is so delightful a thing to disburden one's self, at the foot of the cross, of the load of one's sins—to deny one's self—to give one's self wholly up to him—to follow him—to resign our heart to him!

Almighty God! in thy name I have said to these thy people: "REPENT YE; EXCEPT YE REPENT, YE SHALL PERISH:" in thy name I have said to them: "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light,"—but nevertheless what is it that I have been able to do, save only "to sow," and "to water." It is Thou only, O God, "that givest the increase," it is Thou only that givest salvation, it is Thou only that makest the dead to live! Here then, O Lord God, we once more, in the presence of thy divine majesty, confess ourselves miserable sinners, deserving of condemnation and death; but humbly we fly for refuge to thy grace; and we implore thee, for the love of thy Son, to help our wretchedness, to pardon our transgressions, to increase in us daily the graces of thy blessed Spirit: that so,

acknowledging more and more our offences, and being converted to Thee, we may with all our heart forsake sin, and bring forth fruits of righteousness well pleasing to Thee, through Jesus Christ Our Lord.—Amen.

SERMON V.

ON THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Ph. Mouchon.

SERMON V.

LUKE ii. 8, 9, 10.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And, lo, the Angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

And the Angel said unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

THE work of God, as far as man's salvation is concerned, includes two things equally worthy of our adoration:—the one, the benefit in itself; the other, its application. The one is the gift, which he presents, of his Son, and,

together with him, of all other blessings that could accompany this amazing act of love; the other is the knowledge which he affords of that Redeeming Son, to those individuals or nations, whom he judges prepared or worthy to receive him:—the whole means he employs for the manifesting of this "great salvation," and for the propagation and triumph of his Gospel.

There is, in these two branches of the divine proceedings, a character of grandeur and magnificence common to both: but, in both, that grandeur and that magnificence lose themselves, as it were, in all that is most humble. The Almighty descends upon earth, in order, as it appears, to search out the obscurest, and the most abject forms, wherein to conceal himself from the eyes of the ungodly, who are there incapable of perceiving him.

A helpless child, to whom, in the recesses of a stable, a humble woman hath just given birth, is yet the Son of God, the future Lord of earth and heaven! The world knows him not; the nation which expects him for its

king, remains wholly unsuspicious of his identity:—Such is the first step in the divine proceedings, the earliest union of grandeur with meanness, by which weak minds are scandalised, but which deeply affects him who knows how rightly to regard it, as thus giving to humanity a generous friend—to the poor, a brother—to the afflicted, a comforter.

And with respect to the first manifestation which Heaven makes of this gift, you have just heard it related; and must have remarked in it a similar conjunction of circumstances the most opposite:—so close is the analogy between this mystery and that of which it is the promulgation. Let us, then, endeavour to pierce its depths,—if possible to justify it,—to obtain, at least, a glimpse of its object; above all, to draw from the narrative before us the valuable lessons it contains. Of these lessons some are afforded us in the conduct of Heaven itself, and of the angels by whom it was manifested; others, in that of the humble individuals, who were honoured with this glorious revelation; the former presenting

us with an opportunity of reflecting upon the ways of God, in the application of the benefits of grace,—the latter, upon the manner in which it is fit they should be received.—Oh, that we ourselves, blessed with the knowledge of that great salvation which the Lord hath obtained for us, may learn from this affecting meditation, to feel its value, and to merit the possession of it in eternity!

It is not the miraculous part of the event which we are considering, that could be of a nature to excite in us a painful astonishment; nor is it in that quarter, that scepticism could make the slightest attack upon our faith. It was natural, according to our human notions, that God should signalize, by a prodigy of the kind, the nativity of his Son; that he should dignify it, in the eyes of the world, by such messengers. We no where read, that those celestial spirits were ever employed to announce the birth of the greatest of *men*. They foretold, indeed, to Abraham, that Sarah should have a son; they conferred the like honour upon

the father of John the Baptist; but they came not in angelic pageantry to proclaim to the world that either of them was born. This privilege was justly reserved for the Redeemer, the object of their adoration,—for Him who came to unbar the gates of their glorious habitations, and to present them with companions of their immortality.

The imagination, which, in a subject so adapted to exalt it, may be allowed to picture to itself those scenes which no eye hath witnessed,—the imagination delights to represent those inhabitants of heaven, as attending, at his advent, upon the Son of the King of Glory; forming his bright train; proclaiming his praises; celebrating his love towards us; ministering in the accomplishment of that mystery, in which he takes upon him mortal flesh; sharing, after its consummation, in the happiness of mankind; assuming, with delight, a visible form, in order to solemnize, by their hozannas, that glorious epoch; and affording to mankind a foretaste of the blessings with which Jesus came to crown them. Yes,

My Brethren, you will not deny, that the more magnificent the mode of revelation, the more our minds would be disposed to give it credence, because the subject is worthy of it in the highest degree.

What, therefore, at first sight, strikes with astonishment in this occurrence, is, that in one point of view, it seems to present something mean, or (shall we say?) little analogous to its other aspect;—it is, that not only the earth universally was not permitted to hear proclaimed its Benefactor and its Sovereign, but that the very people among whom he was born,—the People whom God, with a view to this great benefit, had separated from the rest,—to whom, for so long, it had been the delight of his prophets to announce him,—whose hearts were beating, and at that instant, which they had designated, especially, with the hope of at last possessing their glorious Messiah,—who, in short, were prepared to receive with transport the heavenly infant into their arms—(since, as appears by the very words of the angel, the tidings of his birth were to be a

subject of GREAT JOY to the whole people;—that that people, I say, should, with an inconsiderable exception, be altogether excluded from this immediate revelation from heaven. What a contrast with ideas, apparently so natural and so just, is formed by these expressions of the Sacred Historian: "There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night"!

Such, then, is the theatre of the most amazing spectacle that ever mortal eyes beheld,—fields covered with flocks! Such the moment chosen for this solemnity,—the depth of night, when scarcely an eye could be enabled to enjoy it! Such are the persons, whom the Almighty exclusively distinguishes by this honour,—Shepherds! men of the lowest degree, men of simple and credulous minds,—at least that is the first idea we conceive of them,—rude men, perhaps, whose exterior and whose character will, in some sort, justify the unbelief of the nation to whom they are sent with that joyful message! How is it possible, but that this relation should, for the moment,

suggest some difficulties and occasion some doubts, even in minds the most open to conviction?

Nor does the Holy Spirit positively condemn these faint misgivings, provided that we decline not, in order to their removal, any of the means of illumination which he offers us. Before attempting, however, to place such means before you, I make my previous appeal to your feelings.—Is there not discoverable in these circumstances, that sort of divine charm, which produces the presentiment of religious truth?—Does not your heart delight in this rustic solitude, and amongst these messengers of peace?—And they—do they not themselves appear to you in their place, rather here, than wherever crowded assemblages of men give an idea only of tumult and of corruption?—Does there appear to you nothing calculated to attract or to charm them, in that midnight repose in which their celestial voices encounter not a murmur that can obstruct their approach to the enchanted ear? On the other hand, those men, whom, notwithstanding the inferiority of their

condition, we should be wrong if we ranked them with the hired servants who keep our own flocks,—(for in those days the occupation of a shepherd was much more honoured, David himself being one,)—do those men, habituated, it may be, to contemplate, in that lovely climate, the works of the Almighty, appear to you, upon reflection, unworthy on their part to be thus favoured of heaven? Is it not, in short, beneath that starry vault, and in the midst of that beneficent majesty of nature, that it became the mightiest benefit of God's grace to be proclaimed? Is it not in this temple of creation, that Christ himself will come to worship his Father, and to instruct mankind?—Yes, abode of innocence and of peace, it was due to thee, to resound with language that promulgated a Saviour to the world! The heart, at least, finds nothing to offend it here; and should the judgment yet remain unsatisfied, the means of informing it are in our hands:—To this end let us consider the subject more deeply.

If, Christians, you observe carefully, you will find that the event, which thus signalizes the opening of the Gospel dispensation, is in perfect harmony with the spirit of the dispensation itself,—with the object, I would be understood to say, which our Lord proposed to himself by his coming into the world. It was not his purpose, you need not be told, to transfer to earth the "brightness of his glory," —to erect over us an empire, of which the advantages would have had an exclusive tendency to promote his own glory, or of which even the benefits had been incompatible with our self-respect. "My kingdom," he said, when his death was at hand, "my kingdom is not of this world." And this he already gives us to understand at his nativity; announcing, indeed, his celestial reign, by the train which attends him, and proclaims him the Lord, but indicating at the same time, that the object of his coming is not to summon the world to the acknowledgment of its King; for, without doubt, in that case, he had presented

himself to it in another form, than that of a frail infant, "wrapped in swaddling clothes," to whom poverty refuses even a cradle. If Jesus is pleased to constitute for himself an earthly kingdom, it is one imperceptible to the senses, it is one in the hearts that freely acknowledge him for their Lord,—for God's vicegerent. The object he proposes, is, the solution of this important and difficult problem. To furnish man with the precious, all-powerful, and triumphant guidance of Faith; without, however, forcing his belief, without depriving him of all merit, by rendering superfluous the noble exercise of his reason, without thereby diminishing the value of his virtues, or endangering his title to their glorious rewards.

Now, My Brethren, had Jesus made his appearance with the overpowering magnificence which belonged to his nature,—had it been granted to every ear to hear his power proclaimed,—this whole design, conceived by divine mercy, would thenceforward have been subverted; "every knee" would have "bowed" instantly, before the time appointed for that

universal and involuntary submission, which will one day take place; but not till that of the heart and will shall have secured the glory of the elect. It was necessary that "every knee" should "bow;" and then it had been, not with that delightful union of admiration and love, which breathed in the ejaculation of an Apostle, enraptured at beholding, what he longed for, but had not dared to believe, his Master risen from the dead,—"My Lord, and my God!" but with a dreadful uncertainty of the fate prepared for frail humanity, by a Being, mighty, unknown, able to overwhelm it by the weight of his arbitrary will, or to consume it in the furnace of his anger.—Oh, how much more honourable and merciful to mankind, is this entrance into the world, accompanied by circumstances, on the one part, glorious for *the Son of God*, on the other part, calculated to remove all dread, by revealing him as *the Son of Man*, and to win the affections by so noble a sacrifice of all magnificence! To cause himself to be announced to Israel, expecting him as their king, by shep-

herds—what humility! Nor, you well know, Christians, is it solely upon this first manifestation of himself, that the great Friend of mankind is prepared to act towards them with this considerate tenderness. What Jesus does, upon leaving the mansions of his glory, by the ministry of a few shepherds, that will he do again, when he shall have re-entered there, by that of other persons—to use the world's language—as mean; and all, ye genuine Christians and friends of the truth, for your glory—to enhance the excellency of your faith; to the end that, looking through this repulsive exterior, you may, by your instinctive perception of that which is divine, be enabled, in the midst of whatever is most contemptible and poor in human things, to discern *Himself*.

Thus it is, Christians, that in every dispensation which has had for object to impart the benefits of grace, have "God's ways" been far from being "our ways," and "his thoughts" from "our thoughts." For, to return to the subject at present under con-

sideration, to what order of persons would you have judged it expedient to cause the first intimation to be given of an event, which the Israelitish nation was looking out for, with such an eager impatience? Would you even have made it a question, whether it should be to their princes, their magistrates, to the men of learning, to the ministers of religion, to all those, in a word, who compose the select portion of a people, and in whom it takes pride; or to some certain individuals of the class uniformly overlooked,—to a few country-people, who, whether we regard the narrowness of those connections to which, in their seclusions, they are limited, or their poverty, their ignorance, their unacquaintance with ambition, have no influence upon society, and seem to place their happiness in their very insignificance?—Shall I shrink from the confession, My Brethren?—It is on this very account—because, in such a case, our preference would light upon the great and the wise of the world, that God denies them His, and

turns round to the objects of our neglect, perhaps of our undeserved contempt.

Far be from us, at the same time, the absurd and inexcusable idea of contending, that God entertains an aversion for the great, the rich, or the wise; and reserves his mercies only for the low, the wretched, the untaught. Such exaggerations are unworthy a preacher of truth: but it is not, therefore, the less certain, that the unconquerable pride which is too commonly associated in men with every species of superiority, which presents in them the greatest obstacle to the faith, and to the sacrifices it requires, frequently renders them, for that very reason, unfit to co-operate with God, in the purposes of his grace. The learned and the great of the Jewish nation, deluded by that fond conceit which exalted them in their own eyes, above the rest of mankind, by the love of the world, by ambition, and false systems,—much more than deceived by the figurative language of the Prophets,—expected a Messiah who should give countenance to these sentiments; and could not

discover one in him who came to oppose and subdue them. There was, therefore, no propriety in announcing him in the first place to them, who were incapacitated from believing in him; but there was, to persons unsophisticated, humble, content with the supply of nature's wants, and over whom no prejudice of national greatness exercised an invincible controul. Such are the persons to whom it was natural to announce—what Messiah, Christians?—Him who came to exalt, not a particular nation,—not some certain classes in that nation,—not a few privileged individuals,—but human nature in general; by inviting it to the practice of those virtues, which belong to all languages and to all stations,—which put the peasant and the prince upon an equal footing in the eyes of Him who hath created them both, and destined them to an equal fate.—

No, My Brethren, God exalts not the miserable and the indigent, at the expense of the powerful and the rich; but he exalts *humanity*, in which the powerful and the rich are com-

prised together with the miserable and the indigent; which had not been, if his choice had fallen upon the former; for then the miserable and indigent might, perhaps, have deemed themselves passed by,—an idea which the Almighty has no wish that they should entertain, or even conceive. As to the powerful and the rich, can there exist this danger for them? That danger alone to which their fortunate circumstances expose them, is, lest they grow unmindful of the value of those advantages which God has thrown open to all alike,—more particularly of those virtues which every man is in a condition to cultivate; and lest they neglect to place in them the only greatness worthy of themselves. Now, is not the divine conduct, upon this signal occasion, obviously calculated to cure them of that fatal error? If still they permit their pride to blind them, they stand without excuse before Him, who, in the dispensation of grace, has done every thing that could be done to mortify and subdue it.

If the scene chosen for the publication of the Saviour's birth,—if the choice of persons to whom was granted the privilege of hearing it, both give occasion to profitable reflections upon the ways of God, in the manifestation which he makes of the benefits of grace; the words of the Angel commissioned to deliver the blessed message, are not less pregnant with salutary lessons to the same effect. "FEAR NOT," he hastens to say to these favoured mortals, "FOR BEHOLD I BRING YOU GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY, WHICH SHALL BE TO ALL PEOPLE. FOR UNTO YOU IS BORN THIS DAY, IN THE CITY OF DAVID, A SAVIOUR, WHICH IS CHRIST THE LORD."

"FEAR NOT," saith the Angel to the Shepherds. They trembled, then;—those awe-struck men trembled at the sudden apparition of an inhabitant of heaven, and because of "the glory of the Lord," which shone round about them." When they should have given way to an ecstacy of joy, they trembled. Alas! such is human nature! Always ready

to believe that the strong rejoiceth in the abuse of his strength, its first impression is terror at the idea of a power whose delight is alone in protecting the weak, and in blessing the innocent: and thus it is that it submits itself to the degrading and intolerable yoke of superstition, and becomes the willing sport of her fantastic terrors. It belonged to Christianity to restore Religion to its true character of paternal love; and this, it appears to me, is finely expressed beforehand by those words of the Angel: "FEAR NOT."

Can any communication, they seem to say, of evil import proceed from the abode of peace, of love, of blessedness? Can there be any thought of evil in "the mighty God," and his ministering Angels? If we descend here below, it is not to bring destruction hither. At times, indeed, for the promotion of virtue and the real good of mankind, to put an end to crime, and to obviate worse calamities, we have appeared as ministers of justice and messengers of extermination: but it is not to

the peaceful inhabitants of the country, it is to the Sodoms and Gomorrahs of the world, that we are terrible. This day, the Angel continues, a far other office entrusted to my ministry, conducts me to these solitudes. An act of love, such as a Deity alone is capable of conceiving, even now blends heaven, "the powers" of which "are shaken," with earth, which lies yet in ignorance of this divine work. To you alone it is granted, to learn it from my mouth; and to your guileless lips, to spread it through the land, among all those whose hearts shall be enabled to unfold for the reception of the joyful tidings:—"FOR UNTO YOU IS BORN THIS DAY, IN THE CITY OF DAVID, A SAVIOUR, WHICH IS CHRIST THE LORD."

Words worthy to engage our undivided attention!—and which, with the assistance of God's grace, will form the subject of another religious exercise:—Words which ought to produce in our souls, as they did in those of the Shepherds of Bethlehem, feelings

of rapture and adoration! May we then again assemble together in this temple, disposed, in the spirit of true Christians, to celebrate the solemn festival now in preparation, and to receive, with faith, the Blessed Sacrament of the Lord! Amen.

SERMON VI.

ON THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Ph. Mouchon.

SERMON VI.

Luke ii. 11—20.

For unto you is born this day in the City of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying:

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men.

And it came to pass, as the Angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

LET us, Christians, employ ourselves a few moments in meditating upon these words, so worthy of our entire attention. It appears as if the celestial Spirit who uttered them, had studied to comprehend in every expression some subject of surprise, of admiration, or of joy; and so to accumulate together every circumstance capable of exciting the curiosity of his hearers, of interesting and rejoicing their hearts, of striking and dazzling their imaginations, of creating in them rapture and adoration.

The first thing upon which he fixes their attention, is the novelty of the event, "THIS DAY," he tells them,—at this very instant, in a manner. Herein he has regard to that weakness, too common to the human heart, through which it gives itself wholly up to the things of

moment; permitting it, alas! to lose, with the lapse of time, all its ardour, its freshness, its fascination; even though the good in view, supremely great in itself, defies the influence of time, and outlives the flight of ages.

The indifference of the greater part of Christians of our days, with regard to the event in contemplation,—an event which makes them Christians, which, consequently, still retains all its real claims to their concern,—justifies this reflection but too well.

"In the city of David:" the second circumstance offered to the attention of the Shepherds, and no less calculated to excite an interest in them; from its referring to a place dear to them, as being their own country,—as ennobled by proud associations,—as the birthplace of a King whose memory they held sacred: another condescension of the Angel to a weakness—but a very affecting weakness—of the human heart. Alas, My Brethren! do we not here too sensibly experience the absence, in our own case, of even this slender interest? Would not their religion be held

more dear by many Christians, if it had not had its origin in a country remote from their own, among a people unjustly held in extreme contempt?—Bethlehem! thou venerable and sainted name, thou speakest not to their affections: and yet thou oughtest never to be pronounced without emotion,—not for David's sake alone, but, above all, for the sake of Jesus, the friend of mankind, and of each one of us in particular!

"UNTO YOU IS BORN A SAVIOUR:"—Several ideas equally consoling are comprised in these words. "A Saviour;"—the character of this extraordinary and endeared Being. This designation, it may be, suggested but a vague meaning to those who at that time heard it uttered. "What deliverance," they asked, perhaps, of each other,—"what salvation comes he to accomplish? But, in truth, is man any thing but an assemblage of weaknesses? Is he not liable to a thousand dangers,—to a thousand evils? Whichsoever of these weaknesses it be, to the aid of which the Saviour is pleased to appear; whatsoever dangers, whatsoever

evils he comes to subdue, to dispel, or to remedy, is he not a benefactor, whom our love should fly to welcome? And if he be sent of Heaven,—if he brings with him Heaven's power and goodness, the ills which draw him to our help, are neither light, nor transitory, nor imaginary. But are there any evils more formidable, more lasting, more real, than those of the soul? If that, then, be the salvation he brings, how precious is it!"—In this manner might men of discerning minds, such as we conceive the shepherds of Bethlehem, have reasoned.

This Saviour "IS BORN:"—This is another circumstance to be observed; and one which *humanises* this divine Being. Although the benefit which he is to confer, is delayed by it, yet what an interest is added by this circumstance! What? this Almighty Being, our destined Protector, our future Saviour,—comes he as a feeble infant, to present himself to us?—as himself previously in need of protection, and of tenderness? Surely this touching affinity ought to secure him a more welcome reception, and render him yet more

dear! The cradle of a King!—With what language does it not address the hearts of his people, when an oracle had already pointed him out to them, as destined to be the greatest and most excellent of princes!

Lastly, it is "UNTO YOU," that this Saviour is born: "UNTO YOU IS BORN A SAVIOUR." This is a further particular, as the heavenly messenger appears to intimate, which ought to make him inestimably dear to you. You will see in him no triumphant conqueror, who, proud of his heroic deeds, encircled by trophies, and enriched with spoils, re-enters his palace amidst the acclamations of an intoxicated multitude, full of contempt, possibly, even for those who magnify his exploits; animated, at the least, by no regard for any individual of them in particular, since he does not even know them. The Saviour's benefits are not the benefits of vain glory; they are addressed to every one of you; to every one of you he comes to make the offer of himself; there is no one among you with whom He is unacquainted, whom He does not love. And to give you this

assurance—you, the least among his people—is this not sufficiently to set aside all exception? Is it not to proclaim to you "TIDINGS WHICH SHALL BE OF GREAT JOY TO ALL PEOPLE?" Is it not to give you to understand, that this salvation, now beginning to make its appearance in Israel, may be the portion of every individual, in every nation? Is it not to recall to your minds that oracle of one of your prophets: "I have appointed him to be my salvation to the ends of the earth."

If the Shepherds, however, are yet unable perfectly to comprehend what this salvation is to be, a single circumstance which the Angel adds, although it have not the effect of fully informing them, will have that of raising their conceptions, and of exciting their adoration.—"A SAVIOUR WHICH IS CHRIST," he, in the first place, tells them: "that is to say, he is that Messiah, in whom are to be fulfilled the promises made of old to your fathers. He it is that the Lord your God had in view, in the calling of your father Abraham; with

out him Israel had not been. He it is, whom Moses—He it is, whom all the prophets have made it their office to promise, and to point out to you: He it is, whom 'many prophets and kings desired to see, and have not seen; and to hear, and have not heard:' He it is, whom, at the present crisis, above all, your wise men are expecting: He it is, who is the key of all the mysteries of your Covenant with your God,—the substance of all its shadows,—the explication of all its figures. Nor, in fine, is this all. Hear the whole, and adore; for, as in duty bound, we adore him ourselves; —know, that He is 'THE LORD.' Far, however, from you be the thought of divining this mystery; into which we ourselves,—we 'desire to look.' Humble yourselves, therefore: —but, what do I say?—O, mystery of love, far more than of the understanding!—He himself humbles himself. Draw nigh to him; it is you who appear, by comparison, the powerful and the rich; for he hath made himself of no reputation. 'You will find him wrapped

in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. Yet be ye not offended; but rather let your hearts dissolve in thankfulness and love."

Such were the words of the Messenger of Heaven, on that memorable day, the anniversary of which we are now celebrating, in common with the Christian world. Such were the thoughts and dispositions which they might well call up in the Shepherds of Bethlehem, those happy objects of celestial favour. But what yet more transporting scene succeeds to that which we have been describing, calculated to impress upon them, that this gift of Heaven to earth is of a price transcending the estimation of mortal faculties! "A multitude of the heavenly host," declares the Evangelist, joining themselves to the Angel, appear, proclaiming the part which they take in the happiness of mankind. For, My Brethren, all the intelligences of the universe are bound together by secret relations, and compose one family, all the members of which are called by their Creator to take an interest each in the others' fate. Those who, in the abodes

of bliss, distinguish themselves by the sublimity of their faculties, yet more rich in love, employ themselves in prayer for every creature that breathes. The incalculable distances of those heavenly abodes from each other are no obstacle to the exercise of their charities; which, kindred to the divine nature, comprehend the universe, and connect together all its regions. "There is joy in heaven," saith the Saviour, "over one sinner that repenteth." Oh, then, how can it be, but that the human race, altogether sunk in wretchedness, to whose assistance the Almighty, by an amazing exhibition of love, deigns to appear, should excite the most profound, the tenderest interest, in those pure spirits who look upon us as brethren, and desire to have us for the companions of their immortality!

To express, therefore, their own peculiar delight, their admiration, their transports, at the moment when this work of love ineffable is completed,—to express these feelings to those favoured individuals, who themselves had just been made acquainted with it,—to express

them in strains which mortal ears had never heard;—this they set about with ardour, in an hymn, in which their voices and their hearts alike are blended:—an hymn, Christians, of which, it is probable, the sacred historian presents us with the substance only, but which, even if we imagine it complete, offers, in the three ejaculations it comprises, the expression of praise, of love, of benediction,—wherein the divine sentiments are forcibly stamped.

"GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST!" This was their first exclamation. We praise him, we, his thousand thousands who minister unto him, and his thousand times ten thousand who bow before him,—we, who "continually cry one to another: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts!" we praise him this day for his mercy. He has vouchsafed to come to the help of fallen man,—of man, hardly our inferior in his origin and by his nature; whom we have commiserated, and sometimes upheld; but who seemed for ever, in his wanderings, to elude our wishes. "We praise him for a benefit designed to restore to Heaven him

whose loss Heaven deplored,—to open to him, to facilitate to him, the way, by teaching him how it may be deserved:—"GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST!"

"PEACE ON EARTH!" Oh, that earth may worthily answer this work of mercy!—that she may accept this salvation!—that she may rejoice in the Lord! He cometh to present her his "PEACE." The Lord hath "anointed him to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent him to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, to set at liberty them that are bruised."

He comes to subdue men's hearts; but in his laws there is no severity; they are dictated by love, they are fulfilled by love; they convert this world into the image of heaven:—"PEACE ON EARTH!"

"GOOD WILL TOWARDS MEN!"—Family of human kind,—family, miserable through thine own fault,—blessed, if thou wilt be so, through the loving-kindness of Him who takes upon him thy likeness,—we also, the Angels say, we partake of that love, and to his unite our

benedictions; we would offer thee our help, if the help of his Spirit were not sufficient for thy weakness. But such of you as shall overcome, them will we receive with acclamations among us; we will conduct them in triumph to the throne of Him, who, by his example, is now about to teach them how to overcome; we will proclaim them as the well-beloved of God:—"GOOD WILL TOWARDS MEN."

Thus was it, Christians, that the first manifestation which was made of the dispensation of grace, the first knowledge that was afforded of salvation, and of him who came to bring it about, was accompanied by all that could give rise to ecstatic joy. Nevertheless, there is not a person of religious sensibility now in possession of that knowledge, who can declare, that God has done less in this way to excite in his soul emotions of delight. The conduct of those who were the immediate objects of this divine revelation, indicates, therefore, to us, what ought also to be our own. To a consideration of this point we will devote the conclusion of this discourse.

Recovered from their first surprise, and become capable of reflection, after the wonderful vision with which they had been honoured, the Shepherds of Bethlehem fix their thoughts less upon the joys which they had experienced, than upon the real and yet superior happiness in reserve for them; which is not a bright and brief apparition, but a Saviour whom they possess; who is given them to contemplate, and of whom they are one day to receive benefits incalculable. A sentiment new to their enraptured minds—impatience—succeeds to the delirium of their senses: they say one to another: "LET US NOW GO UNTO BETHLEHEM, AND SEE THIS THING WHICH IS COME TO PASS, WHICH THE LORD HATH MADE KNOWN UNTO US."

The Shepherds did not entertain a doubt concerning the truth of the Angel's discourse: but, notwithstanding, what a lively satisfaction must it have been to them, to have the further evidence of their eyes to the same effect! Arrived at the humble scene of the most august and the most affecting of miracles,

permitted to contemplate the peaceful spectacle which it displays—so little adapted to fix any regard but theirs, but by so much the more sublime to those initiated in this impenetrable mystery;—into what temple do they not deem themselves introduced! How sensibly does the divinity there make itself perceived! With what feelings of adoration do they fall down before that divine infant, the object of veneration and of love! At first, doubtless, emotion chained their tongues. Soon, however, in the most animated language, with an eloquence proportioned to their artlessness, they pour forth the excess of their overflowing souls; in terms such as nature supplies, they recount to those around the wonderful things with which the Lord hath honoured them. Only truth forms the subject of their honest tale, whilst discharging, with all the winning effect of ingenuous simplicity, their noble and most affecting mission —to make known the Saviour, to mark him out to the assembly, which this scene, this tumult of enthusiasm and of joy, has collected

round them:—"THEY MADE KNOWN ABROAD THE SAYING WHICH WAS TOLD THEM CONCERNING THIS CHILD."

Their artless narrative, which declares, as I have just said, truths alone, and truths respecting which the witnesses all agree, inspires confidence in the hearers.

And this, My Brethren, it was, which, in the primitive times, in like manner ensured success to the preaching of Christianity in the world,—the simplicity, I say, of the mode of that preaching; the detail, without affectation and without art, of the life of our divine Saviour; the pure and plain exposition of his doctrine, without other ornament than its own excellence: "That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life, declare we unto you."

Such was the language of the first heralds of the Gospel, and the lofty mysteries of our religion,—mysteries, which, set forth in their naked evangelic simplicity, present only claims to adoration,—subdued the reason, while they

addressed the heart. Happy, in any age, the Christian, who accepts the divine grace with a pious simplicity! And how abundant are the fruits,—how precious are they,—which he is the instrument of its bringing forth, by means of the same simplicity in communicating it to others!

"AND ALL THEY THAT HEARD IT," says the sacred text, "WONDERED AT THOSE THINGS WHICH WERE TOLD THEM BY THE SHEPHERDS." And for ourselves, My dear Brethren, if our, our minds were not, instead of being thrown open to the truth, and to the grace of God, subject, on the contrary, to the pernicious influence of the things of sense, should we not find occasion, let me ask, for a yet profounder admiration? Jesus proclaimed by angels,—is he is not surpassed by Jesus in person, showing forth the continual evidence of his power? Jesus born in obscurity for our sake,—does he so overpower the imagination, as Jesus nailed voluntarily to the ignominious wood, in order to the completion of that achievement of love? Jesus proclaimed

Lord in the hearing of a few shepherds,—has he not been declared Son of God, much more effectually, in the hearing of the world, by his resurrection?—And has not Jesus, since his entrance into his glory, has he not caused the same to shine, without intermediation, upon ourselves, by the successive triumphs of his Gospel, and the accomplishment of his numerous prophecies?—Ah, all that brightness of his divinity appears dim to our eyes, only because it has, unhappily, to pass through the dense atmosphere of our worldliness, of our indifference, of our vices!

Yes, My Brethren, if God has done such great things for us, it is in order that admiration should be, in a manner, the habitual disposition of our souls; but, secondly, it is, more particularly, in order to make sure of our hearts: "BUT MARY KEPT ALL THESE THINGS," says the Gospel, "AND PONDERED THEM IN HER HEART."

A second example, which the Holy Spirit proposes for our imitation. Nor let us, My Brethren, ask here, what relation can exist

between our sentiments and those of that blessed Mother? This relation ye could yourselves, in some degree, make appear, ye meek and Christian spirits, in that calm satisfaction, in that sweet and serene enjoyment, with which, in the seclusion of your pious and believing bosoms, you could retrace those numerous but neglected passages of our Gospels, which are calculated to excite in you the liveliest interest, and to familiarize you with your Saviour. Our piety ought not to be an affair of mere memory, the business of which is with words alone; salvation is worthy of the exercise of other and far nobler faculties,—to come more home into our soul, to enter into it, to establish itself there, so fully to occupy it, that it may no longer live for itself, but for him who "hath loved us."

And, finally, Christians, a third consequence of the knowledge of salvation, thus deeply received and exquisitely felt, is that which the Gospel indicates to us in these words, which so admirably close the narrative: "THE SHEP-

HERDS RETURNED, GLORIFYING AND PRAISING GOD FOR ALL THE THINGS THAT THEY HAD HEARD AND SEEN." Oh, how appropriate a termination of this glorious scene!—The creature honoured, succoured, saved, gladdened, by the marvellous bounties of the Creator, and to him ascribing the glory due, in praises and thanksgivings! See here the grand end which the Almighty ultimately proposes to himself, in conferring upon us these distinctions;—to render us more fit for that glorifying of himself, which is the perfection and final purpose of every intelligent and sentient being. We are, it is declared in the Holy Scripture, "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that we should show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light."

Let us then make it our happiness, to utter forth his adorable praises; worthily to celebrate his undeserved mercies; to repeat to ourselves, unceasingly, how far we had gone astray from him; all that has been found necessary on his part to overcome the hardness

of our hearts; all the prodigies of power, of wisdom, of love, of long-suffering, which have been lavishly employed, in the preparation and accomplishment of this undertaking. Above all, My Brethren, let us celebrate his perfections, by making our own actions a reflection of them; for this is the only true glorification of him,—a good life. This is the most grateful incense, in which his holiness takes delight: and, after having presented it to him here below, we shall be permitted to unite our voices to those of the Angels of Heaven, and of "the just made perfect." Amen.

SERMON VII.

ON THE HOLY GHOST.

P. De Joux.

SERMON VII.

JOHN xiv. 16, 17.

I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive.

THE occasion upon which Christ pronounced those words you well know. It was upon the eve of his sacrifice of blood, of the last day of his life,—an evening such as there had never been before, and the like of which shall never be again. Prepared for the separation from those whom he had most loved, he wishes to open in their souls, oppressed by grief, some source of consolation;—to call up before their eyes, bedimmed with tears, the dawn of a happier

time to come. The sweetness of his persuasive accents gives birth to hope in the hearts of his disciples; for a moment they forget the state of bereavement in which they will presently be left; they behold a divine energy descending from heaven to dry their tears, who will not abandon them as orphans in the world. Already this new star is rising upon them,—already a glorious light breaks in upon their souls,—they are already in possession of that COMFORTER, who will be to them as the presence of their heavenly Friend, until their re-union beyond the gloom of the grave, with Him whom their hearts esteem dearer than all things besides.

There was he yet!—that revered object of so much love and so many solicitudes, while he informed them that he was about to be snatched from their sight; that soon he must repose in the bosom of the earth; whence rising to the height of heaven, he will delegate to them the care of that holy universal Church, which he was to acquire at the price of his blood. It is then upon them,—upon feeble

men, that the charge is presently to fall of converting to the truth an idolatrous world! It is against them that the keen arrows of persecution will be all pointed. Shortly you may see them "as sheep having no shepherd,"—as fragile reeds that bend every way at the pleasure of the wind that tosses them. This they foresee and feel; and Jesus foresees it likewise; he feels a thousand times more keenly than they, the sorrows which threaten them; he would arm them against their attacks; he would strengthen them beforehand against the fatal hour of affliction; he would afford them consolation when he should be no longer visible among them.

Such, My dear Brethren, such is mainly the object which our Saviour proposes in the words taken for the subject of this discourse: and assuredly, if the warmth of his feelings and the depth of his wisdom appear strikingly conspicuous, in every previous action of his life, it is here, in this, as that martyrdom which he is going to endure for us approaches, that the tenderness of his nature is fully pourtrayed.

It is while his last moment is drawing nigh, that he gives us the most sensible evidences of his love, by unfolding his designs respecting the everlasting good of mankind, and the unparalleled happiness, to which he permits us to aspire, of becoming sharers in the divine nature, of being made the recipients of the HOLY SPIRIT, and of the powers of the world to come.

1st.—To state to you, What is meant by "THE COMFORTER" promised by our Lord to his disciples, and to explain to you what is meant by the HOLY GHOST, according to the text of the Sacred Writers, and the testimony of the Christian Church;—

2dly.—To prove to you, That the consolatory promise of the text is made, not merely to the Apostles, but likewise "to us, and to our children;"—

3dly.—To exhort you to concur with the merciful designs, proposed to himself by the Almighty, in sending the spirit of truth:—

Such is the plan of the discourse, to which you are now requested to afford a degree of

attention proportioned to the importance and the difficulty of the subject.

I.—The word SPIRIT signifies a substance different from body and from matter; it is employed in particular to designate the divine nature. With regard to the HOLY SPIRIT, we can know nothing but what is discovered in Scripture; and God will not require that we should have comprehended any thing beyond what he himself has revealed to us. Now, he teaches us in the Gospel, that the HOLY SPIRIT is not simply a faculty or attribute of God the Father; but that he is distinct both from the FATHER and the SON.

The New Testament attributes to him volition and intelligence; it speaks of him as descending upon holy men, and even as having appeared in a visible form; it ascribes to him perfections which belong only to God; it declares of him, that he "giveth life,"—that he is every where present,—that he "searcheth all things,"—that he alone "knoweth the things of God,"—that he understandeth men's

thoughts and "searcheth out the depths" of them. Jesus, we are told by the Evangelists, was "called the Son of the Highest," because he was "conceived of the Holy Ghost;" and an eternal kingdom was destined to him on that account.

Again: the HOLY GHOST "dwelleth" in the souls of true Christians; who are called formally "the Temple of the HOLY GHOST," or, according to another passage, "the Temple of God." And in a third place, it is affirmed by St. Peter, that Ananias, in lying to the HOLY GHOST, lied not unto men, but unto God." It is He who was poured out upon the disciples of Christ on the day of Pentecost, and who endowed them with extraordinary and miraculous gifts; it is the HOLY GHOST to whose "fellowship" believers are admitted, and who distributes to us, severally, his saving gifts, "according to his will."

We read, moreover, in the Acts of the Apostles, that as the Elders of "the Church that was at Antioch, ministered to the "Lord and fasted, the HOLY GHOST said, Separate

me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." Our Saviour, when preparing to quit his Apostles, represents the HOLY GHOST as alone capable of supplying his place,—of enlightening their minds, and of converting their sorrow into joy; and he therefore gives him, in a supreme sense, the name of "the COMFORTER." "It is expedient for you," he says to them, "that I go away; for if I go not away, the COMFORTER will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. He shall glorify me: for he shall guide you into all truth."

Lastly, the HOLY GHOST is expressly joined with the FATHER and the SON in the divine sacrament of Baptism, in which a co-equal authority is ascribed to him: "Teach ye all nations," saith Christ to his Apostles, "baptizing them in the name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST." And in the solemn benediction with which St. Paul closes his epistle to the Church of Corinth, the HOLY GHOST is understood to communi-

cate powers and gifts indispensable to the happiness of believers: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," writes the Apostle, "and the love of God, and the communion of the HOLY GHOST, be with you all."

These expressions, My Brethren, as well as many others to be found in our sacred writings, cannot certainly be employed to designate any mere creature; and therefore they prove incontestably that the HOLY GHOST partakes the same authority, the same perfections, and the same nature with God the Father. We know, notwithstanding, that there is but one GOD,—that there cannot be three Supreme Beings,—that there is no being inferior to God, who has a right to our adoration: "Thus saith the Lord God of Hosts, There is no God but me.—Have I not declared it? Ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me? Yea, there is no other God. I know not any.—Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.—I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another.—Thou shalt

worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

It is clear, from all these passages, as well as from reason, that there is no plurality in the Divine nature; whilst at the same time, in the Apostles' Creed, the SON and the HOLY GHOST are made to partake of the divinity with GOD the FATHER. Whence it plainly follows, as we profess to believe, that the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST are essentially united in a manner ineffable and incomprehensible, and that "these three are ONE;" according as it is declared by St. John, and by our sacred Liturgy; which saith of Jesus Christ, that he "liveth and reigneth, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end!"

But, will not some one object, is no contradiction included in these positions? Is there not in this doctrine a manifest impossibility? —No, Brethren, no: it is not a contradiction, for the same things to be, in a certain sense and in a certain respect, identical, and yet to be at the same time different, considered in

another sense, and under another point of view. With regard to the precise nature of the union, and the exact distinction of the three Divine Persons, God has not thought proper to afford us any information; probably because, in our present frail and limited state, it would surpass our comprehension: it is not surprising, therefore, that we are able to form respecting it but an indistinct notion. But shall we, on that account, deny the existence of those divine truths? How many others are there, which, though infinitely less removed from our observation, are, notwithstanding, no less absolutely beyond our reach.

Wretched, indeed, should we be, were we to refuse to believe every thing not evident to our senses;—to regard as existing, only what, under our present circumstances, lies within our sphere;—to admit nothing in the universe, but that which we can fully comprehend! Then would there be for us no future life, no infinite being, nothing but things gross and palpable.—But, I conjure you, in the name of truth, you who, lowering every thing to your own con-

tracted standard, would prescribe to the Deity the mode of his existence, and the limits of his being,—do you understand the things which immediately surround you? You have computed the march of the heavenly bodies, you have studied the laws of their mutual relations, you have discovered the secret springs of their movements, and marked in the firmament the fixed point of space, which must terminate their career.—Tell me, however, are you accurately acquainted with the qualities of matter? You have examined every fibre of the human body, you have thoroughly scrutinized every visible organ: but are you able to explain the grand problem of life? You, who take so much pride in physical experiment, and are able to class the elements of matter, have you discovered the seat of thought? Have you investigated the invisible and subtle connections which unite soul and body? Or can you even tell, with any degree of certainty, in what consists that powerful attraction by which the magnetic needle turns invariably to the pole?"

No, My Brethren, no; we need apply no other instruments of calculation in matters of religion, than those made use of in the study of natural science; and if we put faith in so many phenomena of daily occurrence which are above our comprehension, because we have sufficient confirmation of them,—if we admit a mass of historical facts which almost exceed belief, because related by grave and judicious authors, and established upon credible testimony,—why should we reject the testimony of the sacred writers, respecting incorporeal existences? Why should we call in question those divine declarations and unfathomable truths which we find in the Holy Scriptures, concerning the adorable nature of that Infinite Being, whose Word is truth, and whose existence is so manifest, that without it nothing is comprehensible?

In this Sacred Word, therefore, we shall place entire confidence; and whilst, with thanksgiving, with humility, and with unshaken faith, we embrace the awful mysteries which it hath revealed to us, we will add to it nothing of

our own, we will assert nothing but upon the testimony of God himself; and to avoid all danger of expressing ourselves in inappropriate language respecting the divine essence, to which all human reasoning is inadequate, we shall employ in this discussion, either such terms as the Gospel supplies us with, or such as experience has shown to be most effectual for preventing error: thus, for example, in speaking of the distinction between the FATHER, the SON, and the HOLY GHOST, we say, in the language of Scripture, that the Son is BEGOTTEN: "Thou art my Son," saith the Lord, addressing the Redeemer of the world, "THIS DAY HAVE I BEGOTTEN THEE." And thus again, in the language of the Church, we add, that "the HOLY GHOST PROCEEDS from the Father and the Son."

In using these expressions, we pretend to understand nothing more than that these two words mark a certain distinction,—that they cannot by any means imply a creation,—the momentary act of giving existence to that which had no existence previously; since the

Son and the Holy Ghost are declared by divine revelation to be no less eternal than the Father. And because revelation, in order to express the distinction which exists between them, speaks of them as of different *Persons*, we also, without understanding that the word applies to them in the same sense in which it is said of men, call them the THREE PERSONS OF THE TRINITY, and class them reverently as they are classed in the Gospel; in which we observe, that the FATHER is named the first in order; that to him the SON is subordinated in rank, as is the HOLY GHOST to them both; and that the Creation is attributed particularly to the Father, as is Redemption to the Son, and Sanctification to the Holy Ghost.

So profoundly humiliating are the thoughts with which we approach the adorable perfections of the Divinity, that we should preserve, in regard to them, an eternal silence, had not God himself deigned to manifest them, mercifully to invite us to contemplate and invoke them in our prayers; and to indulge us with a hope that the time will come "when

we shall know even as we are known." We are ready to acknowledge, that, doubtless, difficulties of various kinds may be started in reference to this sublime subject, seeing that the Almighty has communicated to us no further knowledge respecting it. But we do not the less with heart and soul embrace these authentic truths, as being of divine inspiration: and, not pausing to indulge in captious subtleties, nor condescending to reply to such objections as are no more applicable here than to ten thousand other subjects, no less true nor less out of our reach, against which we have seen that they may be brought forward, we humbly submit our reason to the supreme reason of the Almighty; we are content to remain ignorant of what he has not thought proper to reveal to us; and, observing the most rigorous caution and diffidence in our discourses concerning this sacred article of our faith, we avoid all conjectures respecting a question which claims so much veneration from us; and lastly, we profess the utmost charity and unwearied forbearance towards

those who do not fully coincide in opinion with ourselves, upon so profound a mystery.

If, indeed, My Brethren, we are bound, on the one hand, to adhere firmly to every point clearly revealed upon the important subject of religious truth, we ought, on the other hand, to rest satisfied in our inquiries into those truths, with such researches as tend more or less to practical results; bearing in mind that "secret things belong unto God," whilst such things as are left as subjects of human knowledge, are meant to prepare the way to heaven for us and for our children; and that our object in examining the Scriptures ought to be, by means of obedience to the divine commandments, to attain to eternal life. These considerations will form the subject of the second part of this discourse; in which I now propose to show, that this Spirit of truth, the COMFORTER promised to the Apostles, did in effect enlighten their minds, and sanctify their hearts; and that he yet, in our own time, produces the same effects, and instils the same graces into the soul of the believer.

II. My Brethren, the Apostles received the divine gift promised to them by the Saviour, —the gift of the HOLY GHOST, who alone was able to supply by his illumination the corporeal presence of their divine Master. The COMFORTER was to them spiritually, what Jesus had been to them upon earth,—a guide to direct them, a teacher to instruct, a powerful friend to strengthen them; another Saviour, in short, to inspire them with such fortitude and such love for God and men as nothing could overcome; to place upon their lips words such as no human language could gainsay; to make their souls a temple whence God might cause his voice to be heard continually,—whence, by miracles, by prophecy, and by demonstrations of a wisdom and a charity truly divine, he might rouse the attention of an unbelieving world,—whence, in fine, he might convert the nations by a revelation of truth, which, amidst the overthrow of idolatry, and by triumphing over men's corruption and pride, might bring back to this desolate world that

happiness and that innocence, which had been banished from it by sin.

It was, indeed, the "Spirit of wisdom," THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD, which came down to give them life. As the seed confided to the soil is no sooner separated from the coarse integument which covers its precious germ, than its living principle unfolds itself, circulates through a thousand verdant stems, and distributes the treasures of an abundant harvest; in like manner, no sooner had our Lord deposited in the sepulchre his material covering,—the veil of the "temple of his body" had been no sooner "rent asunder," than his boundless SPIRIT, its diffusive activity now released from all restraint, was distributed through the bosoms of those whom he loved dearly as his life,—working in them effects infinitely exceeding all that he had enabled them to perform ere he had quitted the mortal vestment of his body;—and what is a proof that the heavenly gift which they received, was indeed the very Spirit of the Lord, —is, that he is denominated in the text, THE

SPIRIT OF TRUTH, and that the Son of God saith of himself, "I am THE TRUTH;"—that, in another place, speaking to Pilate, he said: "He that is of THE TRUTH heareth my voice:" which very thing is likewise expressly declared by the Apostles:—"If any man have not THE SPIRIT of the Lord Jesus, he is none of his."

Oh, blessed Apostles! instructors of the whole world! what admirable and what consolatory effects followed, to your glory and the blessing of suffering humanity, that precious gift which you obtained! Those things which you had heard from the mouth of your divine Master,—the wonders which you had seen effected by his superhuman power,—those, after the same SPIRIT had descended upon you, you also were enabled to say and do:—like Him, you comforted mankind; like Him, you raised the dead; as He had done, you read in the folded book of men's consciences! As He breathed upon you the SPIRIT OF HIS FATHER, when about to ascend up to him, while he addressed to you those words of power: "Receive ye the HOLY

Ghost!" in like manner, upon the utterance of your never-rejected prayers, and by the imposition of your hands, the Spirit of the Lord descended upon your disciples, and was poured forth upon all flesh!

Your Master was accustomed to say to the penitent: "Thy sins be forgiven thee!" And now he saith to yourselves: "Whatsoever ye bind on earth, I will bind in heaven; and whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted." Your eyes, once too feeble and too dim to penetrate the depths of the Scriptures, contemplate now the things which belong unto the Spirit of God. Ye no longer say to Jesus: "Show us the Father;" ye behold him in his Son; ye know Him "whom the world knoweth not,—God manifest in the flesh." Things unknown from the foundation of the world,—all that, because as yet above your comprehension, the Saviour left untold; all heavenly consolations; all the stores of knowledge and of wisdom; all that the heart desires to love, and the mind to learn; which no ear hath heard, of which no mortal imagi-

nation ever divined the existence, and which never fell within the compass of the mind of man;—in one word, all the "MYSTERY OF GODLINESS" now lies open to your contemplation, and the adorable Giver of "every good and perfect gift" no longer conceals any thing from his children!

Yes, My Brethren, the Apostles became God's children, created anew after his image and in his likeness; and as the Saviour had said: "What things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise," so also might it be said by the Apostles: "All that the Saviour did, that do we; the same Spirit dwelleth in us: like Him we speak the words of grace and truth; through Him we force the unclean spirits to obey. We are no longer those 'of little faith,' whom the fear of men put to flight, or reduced to silence: No! we proclaim the truth even in presence of the rulers who condemn us; nor can the bloody sword of the executioner, nor the ensnaring devices of deceit or falsehood, longer influence us!—Nothing, no, nothing is able to quench

the flame of holy love which has been lighted up in our souls; with gladness and thanksgiving will we endure all things in the cause of Christ. Like him we are ready to die for the salvation of our brethren; because the love of God, that divine principle which the Saviour came to introduce into the world, 'has been shed abroad in our hearts by his HOLY SPIRIT which is given to us.'"

"Wonder not, ye men of after ages! wonder not, when ye shall read of these marvels! Let it not excite your amazement, that the children of God present, in their lineaments, in their conduct, and in their language, the glorious image of their parent. Learn rather, Christians, learn of the Apostles, "men like unto yourselves," what you ought to become, and what it is in your power to become,—brethren, as well as they, of the only Son of God, of the first-born of all creatures! Forget, at least for some few moments each day, that body of sin and death which incloses your immortal souls; and, since you profess to believe in Jesus, dare to think as becometh his disciples.

All these gifts and powers he destines equally to you; he would have you all partake alike of the divine perfections, since he has invited you all, as once he invited his Apostles, to feed spiritually upon that flesh which giveth life to the world, and through faith to drink the Saviour's blood, which conveys immortality; in order that you may be "one with him, even as he and the Father are one," and that you all may "arrive at the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

And, what though neither you nor I have the power of calling back the dead to this sad, perishable existence? What though we speak not the various languages of every nation? Is there any necessary connection between these extraordinary gifts, and happiness and virtue? Did even our Lord himself speak in foreign tongues? And, although he had promised to the founders of his divine religion, that they should perform miracles more splendid than he had himself ever done, does it follow, that his holy Apostles were in any sense upon a level with Him whose "name is above every name"?

—with Him, who is "called WONDERFUL, THE MIGHTY GOD, THE EVERLASTING FATHER"?—Oh, strive rather to exalt yourselves to the height of your destiny and of your hopes. Instead of regretting those miraculous endowments which were conferred upon the first disciples, for the conversion of nations of every tongue and every climate, to the Gospel,—instead of aspiring to those supernatural powers, now become unnecessary,—let the knowledge of the truth, the love of wisdom, the view of heaven, and of the transporting joys there promised to you as your inheritance, and the ability and the will to follow the commandments of your heavenly Father, teach you to give a boundless range to your hopes and your aspirations. God himself and the supreme good are offered to our desires; which nothing less than infinite happiness—no object inferior to Him—can fully satisfy; And having given himself for us, will he not likewise with himself "freely give us all things"?

Should there, however, remain any doubt upon your minds, that the promise of the

Spirit of God relates to you, no less than to the first believers; you may easily convince yourselves that, happily, such is the truth:—See how, in the Acts of the Apostles, not they only, not the seventy-two disciples only, but all besides who had been converted by our Lord's preaching,—but persons of both sexes, have the Holy Ghost communicated to them. It was not for them merely who followed him in his ministry, that our Saviour prayed, but for every individual of all times and places who should believe in the Gospel: neither was it merely upon that handful of Christians at Jerusalem, that he bestowed this wonderful endowment; but individuals of every nation, upon being converted to the Lord, obtained, either mediately through his Apostles, or, as was the case with St. Paul, immediately from himself, the precious gift of the Holy Ghost:—"The promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." —Such is the express language addressed to us by St. Peter.

And have you not read, how, even from the beginning of the world, the Lord has held communion with the human race,—how he has snatched sinners back from the brink of that frightful deluge, which nothing could have urged him to bring upon mankind, but a deluge more hideous still, of impieties and crimes? "My Spirit," he saith to them, with the mild reproof of a parent deeply affected by the ingratitude of his children, whose destruction he had been willing to avert,—"My Spirit shall not always strive with you!"—And have you not read that consolatory declaration which he made to Abraham:—"In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed"? And, says he not in another place, without exception, by the word of the prophet:—"I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh"? Does he not, lastly, give this commandment to his Apostles:—"Go ye, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"?

You then, also, My dear Brethren, you have been dedicated to this Holy Spirit; and upon

you also, ever since your baptism, hath the saving grace of your Lord dwelt?

But, moreover, are we not, on the one hand, required by our divine Master and his Apostles, to believe cordially that He is the Christ —the Redeemer of our souls? whilst, on the other hand, do they not declare, that no man can confess the Saviour but by the Holy Ghost? But can it be thought that the Almighty, without assisting our endeavours, would exact of us that which we have not, of ourselves, the strength to fulfil? Are we ignorant, that faith itself is a gift of God, which he never ceases from offering to us during our whole lives, but which we are free to reject? Nor, lastly, was it the lessons of human wisdom,—nor was it "flesh and blood that revealed" to us, any more than to Simon Peter, that Jesus Christ is "the Son of the living God;" but only the Spirit of "our Father who is in heaven."

We may, therefore, conclude, as a direct consequence of God's perfections,—of his infinite justice and equity,—that the promise of his good SPIRIT was given "to us and

to our children,"—to all Christians, unto the end of the world:—a grand and affecting truth, which the Apostles so warmly admitted, that in writing to the members of the Universal Church, they unanimously adopt this form of salutation: "The communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all!"

This conclusion, however, draws with it certain moral consequences applicable in our case, and sacred duties to be fulfilled by us towards this Spirit of Truth, who alone is able to sanctify our souls:—it is with the consideration of these, that I propose to terminate this discourse.

1. In the first place, My dear Brethren, let us adore this Holy Spirit, to whom we were consecrated by our baptism: let us adore this Spirit of Truth, of Justice, and of Joy, the sole Author of our spiritual life; let us render to this Spirit of Wisdom and of Truth "continual thanks." It is to Him that we are indebted for the Gospel of our Lord,—for his divine precepts,—for the example of

his most holy life. Yes, if we know all that the Son of God hath suffered for us,—all the anguish of soul, all the corporeal torture it cost him to calm our consciences, to satisfy the justice of God the Creator, to acquire for us a right to immortal life;—it is to this Spirit of Light and Sanctification that we owe the inestimable benefits of that knowledge.

Alas! had he not shed abroad his gifts upon mankind,—had they been abandoned to their errors, to their ignorance, to their most degrading vices, we should be, even at this day, without God and without hope; and our merciful Redeemer, who gave his own life to preserve the life of the souls of men, would not reap the enjoyment of his self-sacrifice, and "the travail of his soul!"

Oh, what shall we render to him, in return for so great a blessing—for favours so little merited? How far do all our expressions fall below our sentiments! How inadequate are all the powers of our minds, fully to express the comfort, the gratitude, the joy, which our hearts could not but feel at beholding the

life-giving Spirit of the Most High descend a second time upon his creatures, as in the days of the first creation, when he "moved upon the face" of the world, caused order to spring from the midst of chaos, and light to issue forth from the bosom of darkness!

Now pass with me from those remote periods of might and miracle, to the age in which we live; overleap in thought the vast extent of time and space; for, from the days of Enoch till this hour, the "Spirit of the Lord" hath never ceased to "strive" with men. Although he acts not in a supernatural manner in these "latter days," yet be assured, that even whilst I am addressing you, and whilst with one accord we are met together to ask of God the Spirit of his grace, he is present "in the midst" of us,—that, moved by the fervour of your prayers, Heaven has granted the most earnest of your petitions; learn, in the pious emotions which agitate your bosoms, to recognize that sanctifying influence which is the gift of Heaven, no less than the respiration by which we live, no less than the

breath of God Almighty, which is felt by every soul that exists! These are the rays of divine splendour which pass through your souls, and enlighten your thoughts! These are the tongues of flame, which, resting upon each of you, light up that fire of gratitude, of love, and of religion which glows within your hearts!

Oh, how powerful, great God! is the influence of thy Word! To this unspeakable love we yield; to thy mercies we resign ourselves! We have no strength, but to adore thee,—no will save to dedicate it to thine,—no language but to glorify thee! "What is man that thou art mindful of him, O God?" What is "the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

Oh, let us praise the name of the Lord for ever:—I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live;—I will sing praises unto my God as long as I have any being; because thou hast sent thy Spirit, according to thy promise,—and because thy creatures that were fainting and decayed, are created afresh,—and because

by thy life-giving breath thou proceedest thus to renew the face of the earth! And this, in truth, Christians, we should every day perceive, were we not distracted by our passions, and absorbed in the multiplicity of our affairs; this it is, which we all ought to consider with an attentive eye,—the wonderful progress of grace and of a spiritual existence, in those hearts which have been regenerated by the SPIRIT OF JESUS CHRIST.—This is the second lesson which I design to draw from my text.

2. My dear Brethren,—you who fear God, and are wise unto salvation, meditate upon the favours and mercies of the Lord! Draw near, and see them displayed in those whom our Saviour adds to his Church. See, here, the sick who are healed—healed of the inveterate maladies of the soul—the instant they believe in that promise of the Saviour: "This sickness shall not be unto death, but for the glory of God." There, behold those born in blindness recover their mental vision; their eyes

are opened; they see the truth of that religion which they had denied; they recognize their God, their Father, their Saviour! Further on, see those who were falling continually into sin, raised up by the help of the Spirit of holiness, walk henceforth with firm steps in the paths of righteousness and innocence! O, come, and see how gracious the Lord is, and what great things his hand hath done: The right hand of the Lord hath done mighty things! The right hand of the Lord hath done mighty things! See the dead issuing forth from their tombs,—those who were "dead in trespasses and sins," raised to newness of life. See them, with triumph and with thanksgiving, ascending from the graves of their unbelief and vice! They burst, at length, the degrading fetters of those passions which held them enslaved to unworthy objects; and restore to liberty, to life, to happiness, those who have heard the voice of the Son of Man.

"Thus saith the Lord God, Come from the four winds, O BREATH OF GOD, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live, that they

may know that I am the Lord, and that they may stand up upon their feet." O, if we did but always maintain a consciousness of the presence of God,—if we never grieved the Spirit of his grace,—if we would but allow ourselves to be led by his good counsel,—what "peace which passeth all understanding," what inexhaustible consolations, what "joys unspeakable" would become our portion, even in the midst of the calamities, the crosses, and the afflictions of this present life!

As mariners, overtaken by tempests, upon a sea strewn with shelves, are unable to distinguish, save by the frightful gleams of the lightning, the heaven they supplicate;—no propitious beam shines forth, and the light of day is plunged beneath the wave;—their hearts are torn by a thousand hideous shapes of death, like the waves by the racking storm;—they lift their hopeless eyes towards the blessed regions of day, when, suddenly, the morning star appears, and enables them to discern, close to the abyss wherein they believed themselves doomed to perish, the wished-for

port. Even so, when, upon the stormy ocean of this life, within sight of the grave which yawns beneath our steps, the hideous tempest of the passions is let loose within our bosoms, and mourning in our dwellings; when reverse in every shape—our own misfortune and the malice of others—destroys to the foundation the edifice of our fair fame, of our vain riches, and our yet vainer hopes;—when every resource fails, and the fickle world abandons us;—Oh, then, if we raise our eyes to heaven, what a shining light is that which comes to dispel the gloom, and to cause joy to rise upon our souls! To the deepest sorrow a sweet serenity instantly succeeds, and the song of triumph to the cries of despair!—It is THE COMFORTER, whom the Saviour "sends us." From the shades of death, whither he descended for our salvation, he once more shakes the universe; and sends down from above his Spirit of Truth, to calm this mental tempest: at his command an unlooked-for tranquillity comes over us, and our miseries are ended; we reach the happy haven; we

are born again to a true life, to immortality, to bliss! And then is verified for us that noble exclamation of the Psalmist: "Let God arise, and let" mine "enemies be scattered:" let them "also that hate" me "flee before" me, "as smoke is driven away, as wax melteth before the fire." Then at last is accomplished in our behalf that transporting promise of Jesus Christ: "And your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."

3. I WILL PRAY MY FATHER, AND HE SHALL GIVE YOU ANOTHER COMFORTER.—Our Lord himself then prays in order to obtain for his disciples the divine COMFORTER, and at his prayer the HOLY GHOST descends! They also, the Apostles of Christ, were praying when this GIFT OF GOD was granted to them. Oh, then, My Brethren, let us ask, with earnestness, with humility, with perseverance; and God will not refuse us his good Spirit. We have a pledge for it in his Word, we have a guarantee of it in the example of the disciples and of the saints. I will say yet more: when we pray, the Spirit

himself will pray also within us.—How is it possible that our prayers should not be heard and answered? He who will ask for us, He who will pray with us, is the same with Him who hears and answers.

Then shall we call God OUR FATHER! and he will answer us, HERE AM I! Then will all those celestial virtues which are the fruits of the spirit of the Lord, spring up in our souls,—the love of righteousness and of peace, brotherly love, mutual forbearance, gentleness, humility, temperance, holiness of life. Then will these blessed dispositions in us afford each other reciprocal support; this will inspire us with moderation in prosperity, that will enable us, in misfortune, "in our patience to possess our souls;" all will unite together to uphold us, in temptation, in the day of trial, and at the hour of death.

O, then, descend into our hearts, thou SUPREME COMFORTER of men! Thou, only Thou canst heal the wounds which sin has inflicted upon us;—Thou only canst direct the despairing sinner to peace and joy;—Thou only canst supply the Saviour's place amongst us,

until Thou givest him back to our sight! "O, make no long tarrying!" Our strength faileth us in thy absence. In this vale of tears be Thou our guide, and lead us the way of heaven; be Thou light to the blind; be Thou hope to those who have lost all hope; be Thou the salvation of them that perish! Bring forth in us more than we can ask, or even conceive;—sanctify our souls,—comfort us,—save us! for the sake of Jesus Christ, to whom, with Thee, THE SPIRIT of adoption and grace, and to "our Father which is in Heaven," ONE GOD BLESSED FOR EVER, be praise, adoration, dominion and glory, now and for ever! Amen.

SERMON VIII.

THE CROSS OF CHRIST, THE GLORY OF THE CHRISTIAN.

Diodati.

SERMON VIII.

GALAT. vi. 14.

God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

WHAT is this title of glory, My Brethren, which the Apostle intimates that he prefers to every thing that the universe can offer of dignity, of success, of power? before which all the distinctions of greatness fade away, and which alone appears to him worthy of engaging his thoughts and his affections? Can it be a *cross?* the instrument, that is to say, of a punishment the most cruel and the most infamous? And what is the spectacle which that cross presents

to him ?—He there beholds a wretch disgraced by the vilest outrages, ranked with malefactors, —a man no longer worthy of the name of a man, who, in the midst of tortures and ignominies, terminates a life of obscurity and contempt.

At this sight, the sense shudders, the imagination is terrified, reason is confounded; the Jew is offended, the Greek perceives only a "foolishness" deserving of scorn and derision. But how do these alarms of nature and this blindness of reason disappear, as soon as the torch of faith is brought to light up that gloomy picture! How does the mighty mystery of religion, which we then discover, disperse that spectacle of shame; and leave, to the eye of the believer, only such adorable objects as cause him to burst forth in cries of joy and triumph!

Yes, Christian,—child of light! in the CROSS, in the reproaches of Christ, thou hast presented to thee the sole title to true glory. For in what art thou allowed to glory?—In the excellency of thy nature, in thy privileges, in the Master whom thou hast to serve. Approach,

then, with humility, the scene of the Lord's sufferings, and in the mystery of the cross behold thine own exaltation, and the triumph of the Son of God.

Such, My Brethren, is the subject with which I this day propose to occupy your thoughts: my aim will be, to lead you to place your glory in THE CROSS OF CHRIST, by showing you how the mystery of the cross discloses the excellence of our nature, and the source of our highest privileges, and sets before us the triumph of our Lord.

Almighty God, adorable Saviour! that didst expire upon the cross for us, soften our hearts by the influence of thy grace; and so fortify our souls, that I may be the means of bringing these my brethren fully to perceive and to feel the glory that accrues to us from thine inestimable sacrifice. May they, whilst engaged in this contemplation, be kindled with that ardent love and that unalterable affection for thy service, with those divine sentiments of devotion and of zeal, which caused thine Apostle Paul to despise the world and the glory of it,

and to express his holy transports in these sublime words: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

1. The study of the human heart, My Brethren, is a painful study: the further we advance in this melancholy science, the more afflictive are the discoveries we make. The knowledge of mankind consists only in an acquaintance, more or less profound, with the secret of our misery; and the longer we dwell upon the subject, we are but so much the more disposed to say with the royal Prophet, that man is only corruption and vanity. In vain does pride revolt against the truth that thus humiliates it; our reason, our heart, and our conscience unite in its support; and on this point the force of self-love is constrained to give way to the combined strength of reflection and experience.

Let us, for the purpose of more deeply impressing you with this sad but salutary truth, imagine a man of perfect sincerity—

one neither besotted by the illusions of pride, nor enlightened by the divine revelations of the Gospel—to examine his heart and to retrace his past life; and, after this scrutiny, to pronounce an impartial opinion respecting the degree of excellence belonging to his nature: what is the language that he would hold with himself? Methinks I hear him discourse after this manner: "The further I proceed in the study of myself, the less capable I feel of coming to any certain conclusions; I know not to what end I have been called into life; I am ignorant of what the future is preparing for me. In the midst, however, of all this obscurity, I have light enough to discover that I am a wretched creature, whose existence is but a succession of miseries. If I look upon my body, I see it beset with a multitude of continually recurring wants, to satisfy which, requires painful and unceasing exertions; exposed to suffering, to accident, to disease, to the injuries of time, which must in the end cause its dissolution. If I regard my

soul, at first it seems to me that this spiritual portion of my being redeems its dignity; I find there noble ideas, vast and insatiable desires, lofty sentiments, and magnificent conceptions. But presently I discover that my intellect, confined within the narrowest limits, and unequal to the most trivial difficulties, meets at every turn with countless impediments, and falls into a thousand errors, upon subjects apparently the least worthy of its powers:—I discover that, the slave of unruly passions which my feeble will is insufficient to govern, my soul is hurried on by a thousand inclinations mutually contending with each other; which seem to dispute its possession as a prey, and by turns to wrest it from each other:—I discover that those vague perceptions, those insatiable desires, which consume it, render my life a series of vexations, of restlessness, of continual torture:—I discover, in fine, that, the victim of distresses the most various, and which the most legitimate attachments give birth to, it is successively tor-

mented by inquietude, wasted by contempt, devoured by chagrin, worn by regrets, the sport of every bitter feeling and every harassing distress. Lastly, if I regard my entire being, I behold a creature whose duration is limited perhaps to a few moments—to a journey of a few years—for the most part laborious, always exposed to calamities, and wearisomeness,—to some few days checquered with imperfect pleasures and overwhelming cares; at the end of which I shall go to join the dead,—the earth will close over me,—worms shall revel in my flesh,—and I shall become a thing abominable to my fellow-creatures: and all this, irrevocably. Alas, miserable wretch! Can the few faint traces of grandeur which survive amidst thy miseries, suffice to dignify thee? Are they not rather buried under a multitude of evidences which bear witness to thy imperfection and thy frailty? But, what do I say? So far from redeeming, do they not rather serve, on the contrary, to aggravate still more the misery of my condition? Do they not, by ennobling my desires, lend a more humiliating

poignancy to the sense of my infirmities? Ah, surely the brute, which, satisfied with the lot assigned him by his Creator, conducted blindly by a happy instinct, finds food and rest, is exempt from the torment of desire and of reflection, and sighs for nothing beyond the limits of his destiny; whilst I,—the victim, on the one side, of fond imaginations, and struggles of unsatisfied passion, for ever attempting an unattainable felicity,—on the other, allied to ignorance through my low and mortal condition,—find myself the last and most unfortunate of beings. Thus, the further my researches extend, I but arrive at the more deplorable convictions of my nothingness; and am driven to the miserable acknowledgment, that it had been better for me never to have existed." Such, it appears to me, My Brethren, would be the course of argument of a man left to his own wretchedness; and surely nothing could be more natural than such conclusions.

Now, hear, in his turn, the Christian occupied in the same inquiry into the excellence of his nature: how different will his language be,

My Brethren!—"When I reflect upon my being," he would say, "I confess that I perceive in myself so many marks of weakness and corruption, that the contemplation of my misery and nothingness leads me to the very verge of despair. But when, out of the depth of my distress, I raise my eyes to THE CROSS on which Christ died,—then how do my sorrowful reflections disappear, and give place to nobler thoughts! How does that which seemed to my view so mean, tower up; and the majesty of my nature unfold itself! Yes, when I call to mind, that it was for me that He who existed from all eternity,—He whose voice summoned the universe out of nothing,—He who, supremely blessed, enjoyed immortal glory in the bosom of the Father,—He whom the intelligences of Heaven adored and celebrated in their praises;—that He so "humbled himself," as to "take upon him the form of a servant,"—as to become like man, a creature, in appearance, so despicable;—when I behold him expiring for me upon a cross of shame, undergoing for me every species of ignominy and

cruel torture;—then, however contemptible I may appear in my own eyes, how can I but believe, that he, for whom all these amazing wonders are performed, hides under his seeming vileness qualities of a high order? How can I but believe, that, in spite of this physical frailty, of this poverty of intellect, my passions and my griefs, the restlessness of my desires, —in spite, even, of that death to which I am condemned,—that the creature for whose sake the Son of God descends from heaven to earth, is of a noble and excellent nature, and appointed to a glorious destiny? No! In vain would all the attributes of my being combine to demonstrate to me my insignificance, to convince me of my baseness! By means of the CROSS OF JESUS CHRIST, I should be enabled to confound these arguments, and to disperse these seeming ignominies; and should bring to light beneath them the real grandeur which they darkly veil. Let my Saviour descend from heaven, let him endure the most appalling tortures, let his blood flow, let him resign his life, let him expire for me upon the cross:—

does not this mystery demonstrate with convincing force the excellency of my nature? Cease then, O my soul, to be cast down at the prospect of thy condition! Christ hath died for thee! Cast away, my spirit, these sad ideas of thy degradation! Be filled with lofty thoughts, and break forth into expressions of thanksgiving and triumph! Say to thyself: 'No, man is no vile and miserable creature. Thou, O God, hast made him a little lower than the angels; thou hast crowned him with glory and honour.' For his sake hast thou sent thy Son into the world, and hast ordained him to suffer the death of the cross!—Cross of Jesus Christ, that art the source of all my greatness, how should I not make of thee my greatest subject of glory?"

Such, My Brethren, such are the exalted emotions which the believer must experience in the contemplation of that CROSS, which, by means of the excellence of the victim attached to it, enables him to estimate his nature's dignity; but, without which, we are but mean and feeble creatures, mortal and miserable;

without it, confounded by the sense of my extreme unworthiness, I humble myself in dust and ashes, and say with the Psalmist, that "man at his best estate is altogether vanity." But when I raise my eyes to the cross whereon the Son of God expires, when I look upon that costly victim, whose blood is shed for me, seized with a holy awe while I contemplate this marvellous mystery, overwhelmed and entranced with the immensity of the sacrifice, I take courage and dare to glory in my own greatness.

2. Again: where shall we find a more genuine cause of exultation, than our hopes of immortality?—O man, privileged heir of heaven,—thou who, citizen of the heavenly Zion, and joint heir with Jesus Christ, shouldest regard this world as a land of exile, and eternity as alone thy country;—thou that, spite of thy seeming insignificance, shalt live for ever; and beholdest in thyself a being superior to this stupendous and magnificent universe, which, "when the day of the Lord cometh," must return to nothing;—hast thou not cause to

triumph in the lofty destiny that lies before thee? Hence mayest thou brave the "King of Terrors," and, nobly defying him, exclaim: "O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?" and in calm reliance upon that transporting hope, fearlessly descend into the tomb. The Everlasting himself is the surety of thy glorious privileges. Here again, it is to THE CROSS of Jesus Christ,—it is to the cross, to that altar, which, through the excellence of the victim immolated there, enables thee to judge of the grandeur of thy own nature, —it is, moreover, to that sacred wood, that together with thy Saviour, are affixed thy proud titles to immortality.

And, oh, My Brethren, what would be our condition without this marvellous sacrifice, which redeems and saves us? When I keep out of sight the Saviour's death, and contemplate man as he is, deprived of those blessings which the blood of the New Covenant, shed "for the remission of sins," confers upon him, what a spectacle does he present to my appalled imagination! Alas! I behold him the

miserable victim of our first Father's disobedience, bearing every where with him the doleful heritage of death, marked with the seal of reprobation, tormented by fiery desires planted by Satan in his bosom! I see him falling through temptation into the snares of the "Prince of Darkness," offending his God, violating the law written in his conscience, becoming thus his enemy, finding no Mediator to reconcile him with his angry judge, raising in vain his suppliant hands to Heaven, shedding unavailing tears of remorse; and, lost beyond redemption, hurrying through life along the torrent of his sins, unmet by a single obstacle which might suspend his destructive course, or a liberator from its raging waves; finally, on the whirl of these headlong waters, plunging for ever into the hideous abysses of justice, of wrath, and of vengeance!

Such is the picture of man, as a fallen, a disobedient, and guilty creature. But—O glory of the Christian and triumph of the CROSS!—Jesus Christ, abandoning the abodes of heaven, dwells in man's likeness in the midst of these

children of condemnation. They force him to "bear his cross,"—he ascends the Mount of Calvary,—they bind him to the infamous wood,—they pierce him with nails,—from his torn body the blood gushes forth;—and this victim offered up for sin, redeems and saves "that which was lost;"—Heaven is reconciled to earth,—the Eternal, satisfied with this oblation to his justice, no longer looks in wrath upon mankind;—his compassion yearns over the offenders,—children of Adam, he again becomes their parent!

Nor is this all: Not only does the death of Christ open to us anew the access to a blessed eternity, but, in order to facilitate our approach, he secures to us the privilege of repentance, which, through his adorable intercession, is capable of expiating every offence;—he lavishes upon us the manifold helps of his instructions, of his promises, and of the graces of his Spirit; in order that we may more effectually struggle with error and vice, and that we may go on with greater confidence in the way of obedience and sanctification. The whole

world was then lost, and presented only victims devoted to vengeance. In the prospect of futurity, there was only hell. Jesus, nailed to the cross, from the height of Calvary summons to him all the human race; all are permitted to hear his voice, to share in the fruits of his sacrifice, to follow the sign of the Son of Man, and to attain to the abodes of everlasting joy in heaven.

Break forth, then, O sinner, in exclamations of gratitude; and exult in the cross of Christ thy Saviour! Heaven, which sin had shut against thee, his sacrifice throws open; and through his merits thou mayest lay claim to bliss. Hell, which sin had opened for thee, his sacrifice closes; and, unless the hardness of thy heart plunges thee there, thou mayest escape its tortures. Be it then for ever the subject of thy triumph, and place thy glory in the privileges inestimable which it obtains for thee.

Yes, CROSS of our Lord, CROSS of our salvation, thou art our only refuge! Sinking under the weight of our unworthiness, covered with the shames of sin, tortured by remorse, we

cast ourselves at thy foot; we embrace thee with tears of repentance and of love; we look up to Christ as the Israelites looked up in the wilderness to the Brazen Serpent, and are healed by that blood which flows from the blessed victim immolated upon thee. Wash our souls from their impurities; procure for us pardon, and the graces of his enlightening Spirit; save us, and translate us to those heavenly places, where Jesus Christ dwelleth! "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, when we were dead in trespasses and sins, hath begotten us again into a lively hope by his Son Jesus Christ! God forbid that I should glory, save in THE CROSS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST!"

3. After having contemplated in the CROSS your grandeur and your privileges, now, Christians, behold there your Master himself; if you have souls capable of being influenced by any of those sublime emotions which inflame noble minds with heroic zeal, witness the sufferings of Jesus, and glory in calling yourselves by his name.

Oh, if the soldier glories in following a victorious chief,—if in the laurels of his triumph he can find his own,—soldiers of our Lord, when ye witness his triumph upon the cross, do you deem it no honour to be enrolled in his service? Yes, My Brethren, it is in the midst of the ignominies of Christ, that his glory is most apparent; it is there that his greatness, his power, his Godhead, unveil themselves, and are seen in all their splendour. It is not here, however, my intention to exhibit him to you in his Almighty character, displaying in death his eternal power, by the crushing of his foiled enemy, by disarming death of his sting, and by triumphing over the grave; these awful articles of faith, these unfathomable mysteries, the objects of eternal fear, and hope, and love, I shall pass by. But I will show you in the cross a triumph, less august, I allow, but perhaps more profitable to contemplate, less worthy of a God, but more instructive to mankind,—Jesus triumphant over the weaknesses of mortality, crucifying all his

human desires, exhibiting the sublimest heroism in the midst of his tortures, and submitting to his sufferings, as the Apostle expresses it, "for our ensample."

Approach, then, you whom the smallest sacrifice alarms, you whom the smallest violence offered to your inclinations, drives back, or strikes with terror,—approach, and see upon THE CROSS Him "who in all things was like unto yourselves, sin only excepted," immolating all those affections which it would cost you so much to renounce; and, by the difficulty of the sacrifice, judge of his magnanimity. Come, and see him triumph over Pride,—over that pride which is your most cherished feeling, that pride which lives inseparably in your heart. See this Jesus, "in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwelt," but who clothed himself with mortal flesh, voluntarily exposing himself to every insult, and embracing the death of the cross. See him rendering himself superior to the Senses—to those senses of which you are the slaves, and to the satisfiying of which you devote your entire existence. Behold that

lacerated flesh,—those hands and those feet pierced with nails, that martyred body which Jesus himself delivers up to the torture. Come, and see him triumphing over the feeling of Hatred,—a feeling which has so great ascendency in your bosoms, which is so hard to eradicate, and which is awakened there by the slightest injuries. Behold him the victim of the vilest imposture, surrounded by the executioners, and by an inhuman rabble; who, after nailing him to the wood, insult him, and mock at those agonies the bare thought of which makes humanity shudder,—breathing forth, in the midst of those insulting and tumultuous cries, these words of peace and mercy: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" Come, and see him triumphing over those human ties,—the tenderest of those connections which bind you so forcibly to earth, and the breaking of which draws from you so many lamentations. See him bending, from the elevation of the cross, his looks of affection upon his mother and the "disciple whom he loved," whose souls are pierced by

grief as by a sword,—quitting them with the heavenly calm of resignation, and, in his last farewell, commending them to each other. Come, and see him triumphing over agonies the slightest attacks of which deject and irritate you, and cause you to give away to loud and often impious complaints. See Jesus, encompassed with the keenest and the darkest doubts, silently suffering like a lamb led to the slaughter, and exclaiming: "O Father, thy will, not mine, be done!" Come, lastly, see him triumphing over the fear of Death,—of that death the dread of which congeals you with horror, and overwhelms you with dastardly despair. See him, when, at the point of entering into the gloomy horrors of the tomb, he perceives between himself and the grave only the interval of one rapid instant, uttering in his extreme agony: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!"

But, to what end so many sacrifices and triumphs? For the display of a rash courage? an inconsiderate self-devotion? Is it human force which commands it? No: (and this it is

which fills up the measure of our Lord's glory,) it is his unbounded love that induces him to offer upon the cross a life which nothing could deprive him of. It is his love, his ardent love, which is his executioner. And, for whom does he devote himself?—For the ungrateful, who do him violence,—the cowardly, who abandon him,—the blinded, who go astray,—even for the brutal multitude, who mock and murder him. By the mightiest effort of love, he resigns his life—he dies—for us.

Heroism beyond conception! Death full of sublimity! in which, while we exclusively regard the man, it is impossible for us not to perceive the God;—so far do the divine lineaments which shine out from the midst of these marks of humanity, reveal the perfect Being veiled beneath! Oh, My Brethren, how is the greatness of the Saviour displayed upon the CROSS! What a glorious model of devotedness, of courage, of love, of patience, of self-denial, of self-sacrifice, does he present in his death! Vanish before Him, ye who engage the world's admiration, and whose glory Time, the univer-

sal destroyer, appears even yet to be augmenting! Ye heroes of the elder times, and ye, the children of later ages, who have been found capable of dedicating your lives to your country, to your friends, to virtue, and whose generous sacrifices are so vaunted, be ye no more remembered! The Saviour blots out your united renown. What becomes of the splendour of your sacrifices, when put beside the sacrifice of the Son of Man? Before Him your grandeur becomes but littleness. Your light, whose brightness is but of earth, grows all pale before the splendours of this luminary, —quenched is your glory, in the presence of the glory of Jesus!

Yes, adorable Saviour, it is upon THE CROSS, that I delight to contemplate thy triumph! When I behold thee upon Mount Tabor, enveloped in a shining glory,—when I behold thee, the conqueror of death, springing upward victorious from the sepulchre,—when I behold thee, from the Mount of Olives, carried up into heaven upon a cloud of glory, from the gaze of thy wondering disciples, thy majesty ex-

cites my admiration, and causes me to burst forth in expressions of praise and of joy; but never, never dost thou seem to me so glorious, as when encircled by thy shames. It is there, that all things combine to prove thee greatest in my estimation. There I recognize at once the infinite love and power of a God, and the noblest characters of the heroism of man. And shall any one pride himself in exemption from the service of such a master? And does the being called to follow in his footsteps, not tend to exalt men in their own esteem? Away with the sordid wretch, indifferent to so proud a privilege, who fears and hesitates, when Jesus, bearing his cross, and having his head crowned with thorns, invites him to follow him! But let the believer contemplate his crucified Saviour; let him glory in following him, in obeying him, in serving beneath his banner; then, beholding his glory, he feels the glow of that generous enthusiasm which draws him after his heavenly chieftain, and bears him with winged lightness along that career, whose close presents to him the spec-

tacle of his Lord's triumph upon the cross; his eyes being steadily fixed upon "Jesus, the author and finisher of his faith, who, having endured THE CROSS and despised the shame, sitteth on the right hand of God the Father," upon the throne of his glory.

What a blessed thing it is, My Brethren, to be a Christian! What a sublime vocation, to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, and of Jesus Christ crucified! What a subject of exultation is THE CROSS,—that cross of grace and of salvation, in which we contemplate our own greatness, our lofty privileges, and the triumph of the Son of God! What titles of dignity and honour are offered us, in this incalculable sacrifice, in these immortal hopes which invite us, in this triumphant Lord of whom we are the dear disciples! Where shall we find a subject of glory comparable to that which the cross sets before us? How does all which this earth can offer, fade away before Him, who filled St. Paul with raptures so natural and so noble! and what a contemptible subject of triumph ought the possession

of the world to appear, if compared with the privileges of the Christian!

Nevertheless, however just may be this reflection, however evident may be this truth—that every motive to glory becomes as nothing before Him, whom we this day contemplate—do we, My Brethren, make of it the first of those distinctions which invest us with dignity in our own eyes?

Do you place your glory—do you search for it—in THAT CROSS, which alone constituted that of the Apostle? Alas! such is the blindness, such the ingratitude, such the slavish backwardness of man, that of this sacrifice, which constitutes his sole dignity, his exclusive hope, and which sets before him the triumph of his Saviour, he disregards, he abandons, he forgets the prerogatives; and lives without so much as remembering the glory in which it arrays him.

Where then, I ask you, where are those faithful disciples, the moving principle of whose lives is the reproach of Jesus Christ

—the glory of our nature?—The cross unfolds to us our greatness:—but do you glory in that greatness—you who appear to be at pains only to degrade your being, by giving yourselves up to unworthy and criminal affections, to unsatisfying pleasures, to brutalizing excesses, to the degrading effect of intemperance, of avarice, to that multitude of idle or of guilty passions, that fill your souls with pollution? The cross unfolds to us eternity, our grand privilege:—but, do you glory in these eternal hopes—you who regard only the good things of this world, who aspire after only visible and passing objects—you, whose desires all tend to the creature, who incessantly strive to extract from unsubstantial things a happiness which they are incapable of yielding? Lastly, the cross holds up to us the triumph of our Lord:—but, do you glory in this triumph—you, who, far from associating yourselves with the principle in which it originates, by following the divine models which Christ holds out to us, are always ready to oppress the feeble with the weight of your pride, and

are unable to tolerate any thing that wounds it—you, who, far from "crucifying the flesh, with the lusts thereof," abandon yourselves to such vile inclinations, and search out whatever may pamper them—you, who cannot forgive your brethren the most trivial offences, and who prefer feeding an animosity for years, to consenting to the least step towards reconciliation?—You, who, far from being disposed to make those fraternal sacrifices which charity dictates, shut yourselves up in your self-sufficiency, live for yourselves alone; and would make of your own persons your universe, had you no need of others to promote your selfish ease, and as the slaves of your interests and your pleasures?—You, in a word, who, when your trials come, abandoning yourselves to a cowardly despair, cannot restrain your murmurs—who, far from extracting from your afflictions lessons of mortification, of humility, of repentance, derive from them only feelings of irritation, of rebellion, and of impatience? Alas! Alas! We glory in our wealth, in our birth, in the rank we fill, in the oc-

casional brilliancy of our imperfect virtues; we glory in our talents, our successes, in our endowments of intellect and knowledge:—What shall I say more?—in still more frivolous advantages,—in personal elegance, in the showy attractions of beauty; gifts as vain as they are seductive. We even glory in our vices, in our disorderly lives, in our criminal successes, in the cunning dexterity by which we obtain advancement. It seems as if our perverse vanity sought out, among things the most calculated to humble us, sources of pride, and subjects of exultation. But THY CROSS, O my Saviour! thy cross, in which alone our merit consists, from which alone our immense privileges proceed,—THY CROSS, our only legitimate title to self-respect, on which we ought to rest our true glory,—we forget the prerogatives it confers upon us, and almost live as if it were no concern of ours! Nay, there are even found some impious enough to despise it, to be ashamed of thy reproach, to turn it, in their moments of hideous franticness, into a subject of mockery.

These, then, are the returns we make to the immeasureable love of our Saviour! This, then, is the use we make of those exalted privileges which, by his sufferings and his blood, he hath obtained for us! Thus is "the cross of Christ of none effect;" we "crucify him afresh;" in the words of the Apostle, by our vices and disordered passions, we "count the blood of the Covenant, wherewith we are sanctified, an unholy thing!"

Ungrateful and degraded men! tremble, lest ye draw down upon yourselves those divine judgments, which the Spirit of God denounces against the enemies of THE CROSS OF CHRIST! Tremble, lest that cross of Christ, which should have been your glory, one day become the cause of your everlasting infamy! Yes, this adorable Redeemer will one day return; he will appear "in the clouds of heaven;" surrounded by his Father's glory, bearing aloft his sign, he will appear "to judge the quick and the dead." Then will he say to the sinner, trembling in his majestic presence: "Behold MY CROSS, by which thou mightest have been saved:

I had given it to thee, in order that it might enable thee to overthrow thine enemies, and might lead thee on to glory: by that cross it is that I will judge thee. Thou shouldest have perceived in it the dignity of thy nature; and thou hast seen there only my ignominy; and hast sought thy greatness in the vain advantages of the world, or in the indulgence of thy guilty passions: thou shouldest have rested thy hope thereon; and thy expectations and desires have had no other aim than the vanities of life: thou shouldest have found there an example; and thou hast lived as if in ignorance of it, or else, through thy pride, thy corruption, thy enmities, thy complaints, thou hast continually revolted against its lessons. Since, therefore, thou wouldest not that it should be thy salvation, be it then at this final day thy condemnation everlasting. Go, then, ungrateful and rebellious soul!—Go, enemy of the cross! I cast thee off—I reject thee! By despising the title of glory which I hold out to thee, thou hast denied me before men: I now deny thee before my Father; and I cast thee forth for

ever, to take thy lot with those lost beings whom I know not."

Let us, My Brethren,—let us save ourselves from this awful sentence, this dread decree, which for ever cuts us off from our Saviour and our God. To that end, let us fix our thoughts steadily upon THE CROSS OF JESUS CHRIST. Let us recognize in it our greatness, our privileges, the triumphs of our Lord. May the contemplation of that sacred object so elevate our souls, that they may place all their glory in those divine prerogatives of the Christian; and may we, after having, during our entire lives, gloried in the Saviour's cross, be enabled, when he shall come to exercise his awful judgments, to say: "Lord Jesus, my Saviour and my God, that didst die upon THE CROSS! thy cross alone hath ever been my refuge, and is the continual subject of my glory. When overwhelmed by a sense of my unworthiness, it was that which raised my desponding mind; when, looking upon my disobedience and wretchedness, I despaired of salvation, it was that which recalled hope into my saddened heart; when I

wandered in the ways of vice, it was that which brought me back, by means of thy great example, in the way of holiness. I cast myself therefore at thy feet, waiting for the fulfilment of thy divine promises: Oh, may I, in spite of my deep corruption, have obtained pardon through the merits of that blood which flows from thy wounds! May I, through THAT CROSS which is our salvation, be admitted into those blessed abodes, where thou wilt make us beholders of thine eternal triumph, and sharers in thy glory!" Amen.

SERMON IX.

ON THE CONDITIONS OF JUSTIFICATION: EASTER SERMON.

A. Thouron.

SERMON IX.

ROMANS viii. 1.

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

THESE, My Brethren, are the days of love and of salvation: this is the time at which the Universal Father prepares his table, and invites to it all his children; it is at this time that he addresses to us those words of consolation: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." —"Come unto me, ye who are forsaken by the world, ye wearied and worn with the trials

of life. Come unto me, and I will give you the promise of a better country, and will show you 'new heavens and a new earth.' Come unto me, ye who are tormented by the remembrance of some sin, which, though concealed from the knowledge of men, embitters all your existence:—come to me, and, by making you objects of my pardoning mercy, I will expel the worm of remorse from your bosoms, and will impose silence upon the voice that there accuses you. Come unto me, ye who desire to live a life of greater purity, more conformable to the precepts of my law; but who are disheartened by a sense of your weakness, and by a recollection of so many good resolutions which no amendment has succeeded:—come to me, and I will supply you with strength and firmness, and will uphold you in the way of righteousness."

But does Christ confer upon us this inappreciable advantage which he offers, whilst we, on our part, do nothing towards rendering ourselves worthy of it? Is salvation a thing of so little value, that it is to be obtained with-

out effort and without self-denial? Does the Creator so often invite his creatures, without their deigning to make the least correspondent return? No, My Brethren, you have heard otherwise in the text which I have now read to you. Two conditions are required in order to salvation, viz: Faith, and Newness of Life:—"THERE IS NOW NO CONDEMNATION TO THEM WHICH ARE IN CHRIST JESUS, WHO WALK NOT AFTER THE FLESH, BUT AFTER THE SPIRIT."

Upon these cheering words let us meditate, with all the profound attention which they demand: let us question our consciences; let us scrutinize our hearts; let us examine every action of our lives; let us prove whether we are worthy to draw nigh to the HOLY TABLE, and, in the awful symbols of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, to receive the sacred pledge of our immortality and of our resurrection.—O God! inspire me with such language as may persuade those who now hear me; that so we may all derive from this act of devotion a livelier faith, and a will more ear-

nestly disposed to please thee, and to seek thy favour and thy love!

There are, My Brethren, two considerations upon which we are entitled to hope for the pardon of our sins: TO BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST, (for the expressions, to "believe in Christ," to "be in Christ," to be "of Christ," signify the same thing, and are employed by the sacred writers indifferently one for the other;) and, in consequence of that belief, TO OBTAIN THE VICTORY OVER OUR PASSIONS and TO BE OBEDIENT TO THE HOLY PRECEPTS OF THE GOSPEL; which are operations of the Spirit of God.

To examine ourselves, My Brethren, respecting the first of these conditions—What is it to believe in Jesus Christ? It is to believe all that the Gospel reveals to us respecting this Divine Person.—It is to believe that He has fulfilled all those oracles, by which the Prophets foretold the Messiah.—It is to believe, that, during his abode upon earth, He presented a perfect model of all virtue; and that there was in him not the least semblance of sin.—It is to believe, that He submitted to a voluntary death, in order to

procure the expiation of our sins, and to satisfy the divine justice.—It is to believe, that, three days after being placed in the tomb, He rose again gloriously from the dead.—It is to believe that He ascended up into heaven, after having remained forty days upon the earth, for the purpose of giving his final instructions to his disciples.—It is to believe, that, ten days after his ascension, He sent down his Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, from whose inspiration all that they have left for our instruction proceeded.—It is to believe, that He is our King, our Saviour, our High Priest, our Redeemer; and that at the last day He will be our Judge.—It is to believe, that He is the "beloved Son" of the Father, "in whom He is well pleased;" that "neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved."—It is to believe, that He hath become, through the divine appointment, our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, our redemption;—that "all the treasures of wisdom and of know-

ledge" which before were "hid," are now found united together in Him.

And here, My Brethren, observe well, that we make use of such expressions only as are taken from holy writ. We have no disposition to force upon your belief the dictates of men, the opinions of men, the systems of men. What need is there that man should speak, upon points respecting which the Spirit of God hath spoken? What need is there for man to offer explanations, respecting points upon which it hath pleased the Spirit of God to give no explanation? What need has man to form conjectures, where the Spirit of God has chosen to leave us in uncertainty and ignorance? To believe in Jesus Christ, is to adopt, according to the precept given us by our blessed Saviour, the humbleness and simplicity of a child; and in that disposition to read his Holy Word. There if we find mysteries, he asks not of us to search them out: If there are difficulties, he does not burden us with their solution: If there are some apparent contradictions—and they are only apparent—he will

reconcile them at the last day. To us it matters little: we shall be, notwithstanding, disciples of Jesus Christ; we shall have, notwithstanding, fulfilled the first condition which he requires of us; if we receive with a full and entire faith all that we find in the Holy Scriptures, without the retrenchment of a single word,—a single syllable,—a single letter.

Now, My Brethren, I ask, have we that full and entire belief in Jesus Christ, and in the writings of his Apostles?—Alas! when, swollen by tempests, the torrents rush with fury from the hills, and sweep away from the plains below their fertile harvests;—when some appalling conflagration destroys, in a few hours, those dwellings and monuments which men had reared at the cost of so much time and labour;—long after the waters have subsided,—long after the flames have become extinct,—you may perceive the desolate traces which those devouring scourges have left behind: And thus, not in vain has Infidelity of late walked arrogantly forth. She has poured forth,

like rivers, the poison of her pernicious principles; the city and the country have been alike contaminated; and from the mouths of the most ignorant of men scepticism and impiety have been heard to proceed. I grant, indeed, My Brethren, that our privileged country, favoured in so many respects by the peculiar care of Providence, preserved from so many evils to which the states that surround us have been exposed,—that our country may have suffered less than others from this sad moral infection: few of us have fallen its victims; and the sheep of the flock now assembled in this temple acknowledge, with cordial readiness, Jesus Christ for their Head and their Shepherd. But, alas! My Brethren, how many are there, whose indifference can scarcely be distinguished from unbelief!—How many, who, if called upon to render an account of their religious hopes, would have to answer with hesitation and uncertainty! How many, who, even while they comply with the outward ceremonials of Christianity, while they call themselves Christians, are, nevertheless,

very far from assigning to our divine Saviour that place which he ought to occupy in their thoughts and their affections! How many are there, in short, who have but a wavering and imperfect faith; and who, betraying not the least solicitude upon the subject, reply to those who interrogate them: That every one believes according to his ability; that faith is a sentiment infused into the mind, and over which we have no control; that, upon the whole, there is more of misfortune than matter of blame in a want of faith.—Oh, be assured, My Brethren, that they are wretched, very wretched, who live without a true faith! You, however, whom this discourse more particularly regards,—you, who do not fully believe all that the Gospel declares to us in regard to our Lord, hear, I beseech you, a few reflections yet upon this subject.

True it is, that when we have done all that lay in our power, with sincere dispositions and an unprejudiced mind, in order to strengthen our belief, we are to be pitied ra-

ther than blamed, should we fail in our object; more especially, if, conscious of the extent of our misfortune, we have abstained from every thing, whether in conduct or in discourse, which might have had the effect of poisoning other men's minds with our doubts and uncertainties: I will even add, that, should there, by possibility, exist a man so unhappily circumstanced (which, however, I find it hard to conceive,) God would assuredly come to his aid; and would finally cause such a light to shine into his soul, as would effectually banish all the obscurity of doubt. But when a man, instead of endeavouring to satisfy his doubts, has, on the contrary, suffered himself to peruse such works, and to lend an ear to the utterance of such principles and such pleasantries, as tend naturally to suggest or to strengthen them; when, in short, he has omitted every precaution that might have secured his heart and mind from this baleful contagion;—in such a case he is not to be pitied merely, but severely blamed, and most justly condemned. You, then, who have not

that firm belief in the Son of God which might be expected of you,—are you desirous to escape out of this state of condemnation? For the attainment of that end, three nearly infallible methods are offered to you. Of these the first is, to peruse some of those excellent productions, wherein men of competent learning have set forth the arguments and evidences, to which they have been indebted for the confirmation and fixedness of their own faith. Why should such reasons as have carried conviction into the minds of men of the best information, and the least disposed to take up with a too easy belief, fail to produce the same effect upon you? As the sun, at his rising, disperses in an instant the heavy vapours that shrouded the world, so will the perusal of these writings disperse every doubt from your minds, and convince you of their weakness and absurdity, and of the folly of those arguments, sophisms, and sarcasms, upon which your incredulity was grounded.

But it may be that you have not the leisure nor the knowledge necessary for devoting

yourselves to this reading, or for pursuing these studies. Question and consult, then, those who have advantages in this respect denied to you. There is, thank God! among us no want of enlightened individuals, whose replies would tend to the confirmation of your faith; if you deem the testimony of your pastors unsatisfactory, because you conceive the language they hold to you upon the subject, to be such as is dictated by their office. And, even allowing the truth of what I by no means admit—that the arguments of unbelievers are not without some force and foundation,—allowing that they could assign as many motives for rejecting the religion of our Saviour, as his disciples can adduce for receiving it,—there is yet one consideration, which, when its importance is fairly estimated, will at once decide your preference. It is this: that he who embraces the faith of Jesus Christ, whether he be right or wrong, at the same time that he sides with principles, which, even in this life, contribute rather to augment, than to diminish his happiness, secures himself also

from all danger as to the next; whereas, he who rejects Christianity, hazards the salvation of his soul, without adding any thing to his temporal happiness, if Christ be indeed, as we cannot doubt, the Son of God and the only Saviour of mankind.

If, however, the conversation of learned and religious persons, and the study of their writings, has the effect of confirming our faith, that happy effect will, yet more decidedly, follow the reading of the Holy Scriptures. Every portion of this sacred Book is so impressed with the seal of the Spirit of God; it commands such virtues; it inspires feelings before so foreign to the human heart, and at the same time so entirely in unison with the nature and happiness of mankind; that it is not possible to entertain a doubt of its divine origin. When the perusal of the Gospel is regularly persisted in, and no day is suffered to pass without the performance of this sacred duty, the beautiful, the affecting, the divine lessons of our Saviour, like a gentle rain which insinuates itself into and fertilizes the earth, sink

deep within the heart, and communicate life and growth to the precious seeds of faith.

Lastly, My Brethren, shall I recommend another mode by which you may acquire the inestimable benefit of faith?—Apply to the fountain of grace, the "Author of every good and perfect gift,"—to Him who "giveth wisdom to all men liberally" that ask of him. Lay before Him, with sincerity, the sorrows that distress your heart, and the darkness that overshadows your mind; and he will disperse them by the beams of his everlasting light. He will give you that faith in his blessed Son, which maketh us to "pass from death unto life," from darkness to the pure light of the Gospel,—a faith which not only implies the being persuaded and convinced, but which will besides render you superior to the snares of the world, and secure you the victory over the evil dispositions of your own nature. For this, My Brethren, is the result of a genuine faith; as it is also the second condition pointed out by St. Paul, upon which we may obtain salvation:—"THERE IS NOW NO CONDEMNATION TO

THEM WHICH ARE IN CHRIST JESUS, WHO WALK NOT AFTER THE FLESH, BUT AFTER THE SPIRIT.*

II. The sense of this passage is obvious: There is now no condemnation to those who, taking the Gospel, the work of God's Spirit, for the rule of their principles and of their conduct, are enabled, by that almighty help, to obtain an effectual mastery over their passions and their will: but it is not so easy to ascertain whether we possess this necessary condition of salvation. For, on the one hand, we know but too well that we have many times disobeyed the laws of the Gospel, and that hardly a day passes without some addition to those instances of disobedience; whilst, on the other hand, there are some of us who feel a sincere desire to master their evil inclinations, and whose endeavours to "walk no more after the flesh," but "after the spirit," are not devoid of sincerity.

We shall lay before you such reflections as may be the means of relieving you from this state of uncertainty, and of enabling you to

give an answer to this important question: Do we possess this indispensable condition? Do we "WALK NO MORE AFTER THE FLESH?" Do we "WALK AFTER THE SPIRIT?"

1. Let us, in the first place, examine ourselves respecting the principles of our virtuous actions.

In point of fact, there is not a person, with a very few exceptions, who might not boast of possessing some of the virtues prescribed in the Gospel. Our religion is so consistent with all that reason, when unbiassed by the passions, teaches us, that a judicious and prudent man is able, merely by the help of prudence and judgment, to follow the same line of conduct upon many occasions with the disciple of Jesus Christ; without having any claim to the Christian character of "walking not after the flesh, but after the spirit."

If, therefore, you are desirous of putting an end to all uncertainty on this head, examine whether, in the practice of your virtues, you confine yourselves to those which are usually followed by some worldly recompence; or whether,

neglecting such advantages, you do good for its own sake, because you have learned from the Gospel to love it, and to hate its opposite, evil. With regard to Moral Purity, for example: You, my dear Brother, *you* are holy —you are wise and regular in conduct, and of morals the most irreproachable. But, are you so, because you view with horror every pollution of that body, which is called "the Temple of the Holy Ghost"?—because the same sentiment animates you, which caused Joseph to exclaim: "How shall I do this great evil, and sin against God?" If so, then are you a genuine disciple of Christ: you "walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." But, on the other hand, is a dread of the pains, the miseries, and the shames, which are the portion of those who give themselves up to a life of sensuality, the principle by which you are actuated? Or is it a well-balanced nature, joined to a timidity of character, to which you owe your preservation from those sins, which have been the opprobrium of men of more imaginative and more ardent dispo-

sitions?—Then you are no longer Christ's genuine disciple: you walk not "after the spirit," but "after the flesh."

Again, with regard to Charity.—You are what the world calls charitable: you give liberally to the poor; you cannot look without emotion upon the miserable and the afflicted, —Is it because you see in your fellow-creatures your brethren, the children of God, and the redeemed of Jesus Christ? Is it from a consciousness that it is Jesus Christ who is "an hungered," to whom you "give meat;" —that it is Christ who is "thirsty," to whom you "give to drink;"—that it is Christ who is "naked," whom "ye clothe"? Is your charity beyond the reach of those causes of disgust, which we never fail to encounter in the exercise of beneficence?—Then are you indeed a true disciple of Jesus Christ: you "walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." But, do you not, on the contrary, follow the suggestions and impulses of a disposition rather prodigal and improvident than truly generous? Do you delight to indulge yourselves in the

luxury of those praises which your charity elicits? Do you take offence, the moment you discover, in the objects of your generosity, the absence of those sentiments of devoted gratitude, which you think you have a right to expect in them? If, in short, you rest your charity upon any human principle, you are not a true disciple of Jesus: you "walk after the flesh," and not "after the spirit."

Lastly, extend this same mode of self-examination to the virtue of Humility.—You are humble, My Brother—you are known for your mildness and modesty, for patience, for self-control, and a discreet backwardness in word and deed.—Is it because our Saviour hath said: "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God"? Is your humility of that sort, which constitutes the ground-work and essence of the Christian character? Are you humble, because you know that "whosoever is least on earth, the same shall be greatest in the kingdom of heaven"? —You are a true disciple of Jesus Christ: you "walk not after the flesh, but after the

spirit." But, on the contrary, is it the lessons of merely human wisdom, which have taught you, that, in order to go on prosperously in life, in order to secure the affections and applause of the world, it is necessary to injure no one, to give umbrage to no one, to study the caprices of all with whom we find ourselves in any way connected;—that the most certain method of securing influence over others, is to seem, in all cases, ready to give way to them;—that, to gain proselytes to one's own opinions, and one's own sentiments, it is only necessary to affect the adoption of other men's opinions, and seemingly to coincide with other men's sentiments? You are no true disciple of Jesus Christ: you "walk after the flesh," and not "after the spirit."—Alas, how often does a specious exterior conceal deformity within! How many "whited sepulchres" do we meet with, in which there is only dust and the rankness of corruption; because Christ is not there to impart the "odour of life!" How many springs, whose waters appear pellucid, while they are undisturbed,

but which grow muddy with motion, because, at bottom, they are full of earth and foulness.

2. We ought, secondly, to examine ourselves respecting the passions which possess the greatest influence over us; in order to ascertain how far our vigilance and our efforts have been turned against them. If it may with truth be said, that there is scarcely an individual who possesses not some one virtue; still more truly may we assert, that there is not one but is prone to some vice, not one but is the slave of some passion.

If, therefore, you would ascertain whether you "walk no more after the flesh, but after the spirit," your self-examination must be very different from that of the majority of mankind; who dwell with delighted complacency upon their better qualities, and love to contemplate their virtues; but derive from that examination only fresh motives for giving themselves up freely and without restraint to their besetting propensity. Else would you resemble the Pharisee of whom it is said, that he thanked God that he was not an "extortioner,

unjust, an adulterer;" while he overlooked that pride—that shocking pride—with which his whole soul was imbued, and which was alone sufficient to justify his condemnation. You ought rather to say: It is possible, I may not be devoid of some of those qualities which mankind esteem;—that, for example, I conscientiously discharge the duties of my calling, and of the station which I occupy in the world; that I may be a good father, a good husband, a good master, a good citizen: but it is certain, at the same time, that there lurks within my soul such a secret jealousy and envy, as leads me at every instant into the sin of slander and detraction. This is the side on which I fail; it is to this point that I ought to direct my most vigilant efforts; and so long as I forbear to call myself to a just account—so long as I am willing to give to slander a milder name than that of an unpardonable vice—I shall be walking "after the flesh," and not "after the spirit."

It is possible, you ought to say, that I am not wholly devoid of those qualities which

attract the love of my associates,—such as good-nature, liberality, an obliging disposition, disinterested friendship: Yet, O my soul, thou art not exempt from the dark stains of some hateful vice! Yet, O my heart, an unhallowed flame consumes thee! *There* is the enemy with whom it is my business to contend,—*there* lies the way which leads to my inevitable destruction,—*there* is the point to which I ought to direct every effort! And so long as this forbidden passion remains unsubdued, I walk, alas, "not after the spirit, but after the flesh."

It is possible, you ought to say, that I have what the world calls a generous and exalted mind. True: whatever is grand and noble attracts my admiration: I abhor all that bears the character of meanness and of falsehood. But pride—pride enslaves me! I cannot live without being praised and admired. I never pardon an injury; and with regard to those who rank as my superiors in the world, so far from their ever obtaining any sincere proofs of my respect and veneration, I look upon

them with haughtiness and disdain. This is the passion which will undo me, as it has already so many besides:—it is against this that I ought to direct my most vigilant endeavours; and so long as I continue the slave of pride, I shall always "walk after the flesh," and not "after the spirit."

In fact, My Brethren,—and this is a question which deserves your attention—how can we convert those qualities which we may fairly regard as merely the result of our particular temperament, or of our education, or of the circumstances by which we have been casually surrounded, into a title to the rewards of Heaven? They are benefits which the Almighty has bestowed upon us for our happiness,—talents which he has entrusted to us, and for the use of which he will call us to a strict account: but the efforts we make use of, in order to shake off the yoke of the passion which disturbs and enslaves us, because we are convinced that sin is the object of the Almighty's horror, and that it is sin which "crucified the Lord of Glory," and which

daily hurls its thousands into perdition;—these constitute virtue—these are the sure evidences that we "walk no more after the flesh, but after the spirit."

Lastly: the most effectual mode of ascertaining whether we comply with the conditions of salvation, is to examine the thoughts which occupy, and the sentiments which animate us, upon occasions such as this; when we are assembled for the purpose of celebrating the triumph which our Lord has achieved over sin and death.

Alas, My Brethren, the man who "WALKS AFTER THE FLESH, AND NOT AFTER THE SPIRIT," perceives in this Hallowed Rite nothing but what strikes the sense. He eats the bread,—he drinks the wine,—he sees a man who speaks, and others who listen to him,—coldly and unmoved, unless by curiosity to know in what manner he who officiates acquits himself of his task. He is conscious of nothing which strikes him—nothing which calls up any emotion in his soul. Having come to this Holy Table, without preparation, he leaves it without

effect; and, once withdrawn from it, he remembers it no more. Perhaps, alas! this day is for him but a day of vanity—an occasion of dissipation and indulgence!

The natural man cannot comprehend the things which belong to the Spirit of God: to him they appear "foolishness," because they can only be judged of spiritually: but the true believer, who "walketh not after the flesh, but after the spirit,"—O how different a spectacle does his heart present to God, who contemplates it, and to the Angels of God who "have a delight therein!" Having prepared himself,—by the reading of the Holy Scriptures—by acts of charity—by the forgiveness of injuries—by meditation and by prayer,—for sharing in this sacred feast to which Christ invites his disciples, no sooner does he enter the temple—no sooner behold the awful symbols of his Saviour's body and blood—than a multitude of thoughts and feelings rush mingled through his soul:—He calls to mind the sufferings that Christ has endured for the salvation of human kind;—His obscure Lot:

He was born in a stable, and cradled in a manger;—the Poverty in which he lived, so touchingly told in his own melancholy language—"the foxes have holes, and the fowls of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head;"—the Persecutions to which he was exposed: an object of hatred to all the powerful and the great of his nation, He found not an asylum, even in private friendship; but, betrayed by one disciple, and denied by another, in the hour of trial and of danger He was deserted by them all;—the Agonies that assailed Him in the garden of Gethsemane: From his body there fell "as it were great drops of blood"—his soul was overwhelmed—expressions of complaint burst from his sad lips—He implores the Father, that, "if it were possible, that cup might pass from Him;"—the Scene of Horror which closed his life: His hands and feet pierced with nails—his temples crowned with thorns—his side lacerated by the murderous spear!—It is for me, he repeats to himself, it is for *me*, that Christ suffered all this

woe! And if there be any thing that can yet more deeply affect him,—if any thing can augment his flowing tears,—they gush afresh at witnessing, in imagination, that spectacle of grief, never to be forgotten, when the Son of God's love, just before his latest sigh is breathed, gives final utterance to his sorrows, in that piercing cry, which, sent through the land of Israel, represents so well his human nature contending with the grasp of death: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!"

Faith, however, by representing to the Christian his Lord's sufferings and death, not only gives rise to those thoughts and sentiments which are the most becoming in the communicant, but she likewise inspires him with the sublimest hopes: she tells him, that since Jesus Christ is risen again from the dead, he also shall be raised again; that since Jesus Christ is glorified, he shall be glorified also; that since Jesus Christ hath "sat down at the right hand of God," he also, having been victorious over the world, shall be permitted to

sit at Christ's right hand:—She tells him, that, having upon him the mark of that spotless "Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world," he has nothing to dread from the sword of the destroying Angel; that "Death" is for ever deprived of his "sting," and the "Grave" of its "victory;" that, after a period of quiet sleep, during which he will be refreshed from the toils and the travail of earth, he shall awake at the dawn of an everlasting day; and shall behold, with transports unutterable, "new Heavens and a new Earth;" where his Lord shall reign over the "just made perfect," and every blessing shall come to embellish an abode, compared with which, all the splendours and the glory and the magnificence of this world, are but as the melancholy glooms of a dungeon!

May these sentiments and these hopes accompany you to the Lord's Table! May the vow of fidelity that you are now going to make to Christ your Saviour, be inscribed in the Book of Life, upon a page that shall never be blotted

out! May you imbibe from the participation of this blessed Sacrament such renewed strength and help, as will enable you to rise victorious over sin, and henceforth to "WALK NO MORE AFTER THE FLESH, BUT AFTER THE SPIRIT!" Amen.

SERMON X.

ON BENEFICENCE.

P. Picot.

SERMON X.

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2 Cor. ix. 9.

He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever.

IT is a very common thing to hear complaints made respecting the inequality of men's fortunes and conditions. Such complaints, although proceeding, for the most part, from the victims of that inequality, are likewise occasionally heard from men of feeling among the superior classes, whose commiseration has been powerfully excited by the sufferings of the lower orders. Personal interest in the

one class, and even the common feelings of humanity in the other, are apt to impart to these complaints an excess of bitterness and of poignancy. It is the inequality of conditions in which the necessity of labour originates, and upon which subordination chiefly depends; this it is, which fosters emulation, excites industry, affords scope to talents, gives birth to the arts,—which constitutes, in a word, the life and spirit of society. At the same time it cannot be denied, that if there is exaggeration in these complaints, they are not always without the appearance of being well founded;—to a certain extent, they are so in reality. So many abuses may, and in fact, do, cause the inequalities of rank to bear grievously upon the poor and the powerless, —the advantages of the privileged orders so frequently degenerate into oppression and contempt of the rest,—and, in most cases, such a disproportion appears between men's means and their wants, that it is impossible not to be struck with the fact.

Doubtless, however, My Brethren, the pro-

vidence of God has not contrived this unequal distribution of rank, without a sufficient justification of himself. It consists in this: That by allowing the distinctions of rich and poor to exist, the Creator of both has given occasion to the exercise of BENEFICENCE; He has ordained the spectacle of the indigence of those who endure privation, to be a continual spur to the liberality of such as are blessed with abundance. The more various and extreme are the inequalities of fortune, the more forcible and impressive is that voice of conscience, which commands us to dispose of our superfluities in works of charity.

If, Christians, there be any one virtue respecting the excellency of which there can be no difference of opinion, it is that which we are now called upon to recommend. To speak to you of Beneficence, is to describe a duty to which you are already in the habit of attaching only pleasurable ideas—it is to paint to you human nature in its most favourable point of view—it is to dignify you in your own esteem—it is to show you an image

of yourselves, in which the fairest features only are brought to light; and this, by a delineation of those exalted emotions, which if you are not in the habit of experiencing, you, at least, have it always in your power to experience. You, that have tasted the delights of active charity, it is to retrace with you the pleasant paths that you have trodden, and to renew the sense of their enjoyments!—Ye, whose compassionate tenderness sloth has rendered nugatory, it is to second the force of the impulse which urges you!—To you, ye destitute, it is to bring consolation!—Religion of my Saviour, it is to display thee in all thy glory!—Church of my country and my home, it is to declare thy praises!

Oh, that, in discoursing upon this noble subject, we may effectually fulfil the duties of our ministry—that, by happily pouring forth in words, the thoughts which we feel within, we may at the same time thereby open a way for the current of your beneficence! Do Thou, O God of charity, enable us to resemble thee!

The Holy Spirit, for the purpose of encouraging our charity towards the poor, makes use here of one of those natural and affecting expressions of commendation, which we ourselves so frequently utter, upon hearing of a generous action, or upon calling to mind the life of a charitable man: "HE HATH DISPERSED ABROAD; HE HATH GIVEN TO THE POOR: HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ENDURETH FOR EVER." The word "righteousness" is put in this place for charity, according to the genius of scripture language; and also because it is intended by the Almighty, that one part of the possessions of the rich should be held by them, as, in a literal sense, the stewards of their poorer brethren: the example stands in the room of a precept. The permanence of charity is the point dwelt upon. Here, then, at this interesting point of view, let us, My Brethren, survey the subject; and while we endeavour to draw a perfect picture of Christian Beneficence, let us in particular attend to that distinguished advantage, by which it is here characterized.

Of the charity of him who "hath dispersed" his benefits among the poor, that which "remaineth," is,

1. The immediate FRUITS of Charity; or, the good which it produces in the world:

2. The EXAMPLE of Charity; or, the model which it proposes to those who witness it:

3. The RECOMPENCE of Charity; or, the rewards which it meets with from God and man:—Each of which points offers an abundant source of meditation.

I. That which "remaineth" of charity is, I have said, in the first place, the FRUITS of it, or the good which it produces in the world. Its tendency is to diminish the quantity of evil, to increase the amount of good,—in all respects, by preventing misery and softening affliction, to meliorate the condition of mankind. Benefits are, I know, sometimes thrown away; but experience proves, notwithstanding, that a few benevolent individuals in society suffice to render thousands of others happy; and that the consequences of charity

often survive through generations. To be convinced of this, My Brethren, let us consider this virtue in the details of some of its operations.—You see, in the first place, the man of Beneficence selecting some one of those children of misfortune, whose evident distress it will require continued exertions to relieve. He acquaints himself with all the features of his case, and by a knowledge of these particulars, is enabled to apply his aid in the most efficient mode; he seconds his assistance by his advice, attends in person to the application of his benefits,—in short, makes, in a manner, all the sufferer's interests his own. Is the object of his charities young? He uses all his means for establishing him in the world, and by serving him to benefit society. Is he old? He finds him out an asylum—manages for him his little resources —procures him friends,—thus directing his generous exertions less to the present than to the future. See him next doing good upon a wider scale.—He makes himself the protector and support of a whole family. In

this "house of mourning" every individual is a sufferer. What an undertaking, to afford relief to each of these unfortunates! Yet, having listened to the detail of their diversified sorrows, with a patience unwearied by their repetition, and having, as he thinks, discovered for each some course of life, in which he has it in his power to insure their advancement, he sets about the task. From struggling in the lowest depths of poverty, they find themselves raised, by his paternal hand, to respectability and comfort. In imitation of that God whose earthly image he is, "not letting them go, except he bless them," he creates for them a new world; and, receiving new life from his beneficence, they rejoice together at the dawn of their opening prosperity.

Let us take a yet more striking example. —We owe to a principle of beneficence, the foundation of charitable institutions and religious houses. But who, My Brethren, let me ask you, is capable of calculating the amount of good, which institutions of this kind, when judiciously directed, have con-

ferred upon society? By these charitable institutions, how many families have been supported in their decline, and preserved from ruin,—how many individuals have been snatched from untimely death,—how many tears have been prevented,—how many occasions of despair have been avoided! The hope that is generated in the bosom of indigence calls its resources into activity; and it is the effect of these institutions to strengthen the fortitude of the poor, to encourage the efforts of industry, and in every way to promote individual exertion. By means also of the establishment of religious houses, how many germs of virtue are planted,—what blessed consequences may we not look forward to from the instilling of that fear of God, which is the most powerful motive upon the human mind,—how many persons are "trained up in the way they should go,"—what a multitude of crimes are prevented! Blessings imperishable be upon you, in the name of your country and of the unfortunate, ye who are the authors of these lasting benefits! The

effect of charities such as these, is not confined to the immediate objects of them,—they are carried down to their children. There is thus, as it were, a spirit of perpetual emulation of honest independence, and piety of life, established between them and their descendants. The original benefits, like seed committed to the soil, leave behind them an abundant produce; the harvest of which is in some cases gathered in by generation after generation; and who can tell to what extent they may have changed the condition of the world? Among those who now hear me, how many, perhaps, are there who owe it to the charities of the benevolent, that they are what they are,—how many are the families, now prosperous, that we should have seen perishing and becoming extinct, had not the hand of those that could help been stretched out for their support! The early Christians distributed largely in charity; poverty was not known among them; the society flourished; it became the asylum of the virtues; and, by a natural consequence, they enjoyed a degree

of happiness which excited the envy of their persecutors; and to such an extent did their numbers increase, that the Emperor Julian, astonished at a prosperity which redoubled persecutions had no effect in repressing, at length discovered the source of it in the magnitude of their alms; and recommended to his pagan subjects, after their example, the foundation of hospitals.

What improvements, indeed, in society,—what a favourable change in the condition of each of its members, have we not a right to expect from the practice of beneficence? Is there a single necessity of body or of mind to which it is not applicable? Or what bitterness of soul is there, which we may not pour into its pitying bosom?—Thou desolate mother, that, like Hagar in the wilderness, removest far off from thy famishing babe, exclaiming in thy grief: "Let me not see my child die!" resign thyself not to despair:—thou thinkest thyself deserted; but thou art not: raise thy weeping eyes, and behold at thy side the man of Beneficence—that messenger of Heaven and

minister of its bounties! He is come to dry thy tears—he shall preserve thy boy's life—he shall say to thee: "Fear not, I have heard the voice of thy child;" or, in the words of Joseph to his brethren: "God did send me before you to preserve your lives." Nor are these all the happy effects produced by this virtue. Is it not to Benevolence that recourse may be most effectually had, to remedy the inevitable defects of governments? Is it not Benevolence that gives a grace and authority to religion, of which it is the first duty,—that keeps alive liberality of sentiment in a nation, and strengthens the bonds of society? Is it not the most effectual barrier of luxury, the most natural antidote to excessive riches, the silken tie which connects together opulence and want? Through its means, in the best sense of the word, "the rich and the poor meet together," without the collision of passions or of interests, for the sole purpose of promoting mutual charity. A preservative from envy, and the never-failing cure of pride and selfishness, it obviates, says a celebrated

statesman, almost every public vice, more especially in small states.

It is not then without reason, My Brethren, that the fruits of charity are said to "remain." He who hath lived in the practice of it, may disappear from among mankind—not so his benefits. Like the vital blood which bears with it life and health in its passage to the remotest ramifications of the body, the charities which he has scattered abroad, circulate, when he is gone, through the social constitution, and convey vitality to its perishing members: every enjoyment of those he has re-established in prosperity, is a fresh obligation due to him; every instant's continuation of their well-being is another benefit of his hand. And whilst all that attracts the world's admiration passes with the fleeting hour,—whilst glory evaporates like a cloud,—whilst pleasure "taketh to itself wings,"—whilst fortune appears and disappears in the same day,—whilst the most brilliant intellectual qualities, the lightning of the mind, the glowing gifts of genius, sparkle for a moment and expire,

—whilst life itself, with its idle pageantry, vanishes like a dream; the substantial effects of charity "remain," and proclaim the praises of the Benevolent. Alas! how many are there of the favourites of fortune, who desolate the earth by their destructive passions; how many men, in whose hands riches are as an overflowing pestilence, that ravages society; whilst, in the possession of the avaricious, treasures become stagnant waters, which, instead of fertilizing the land, poison and infect their own bed.—Thanks to the virtue of Beneficence, we sometimes enjoy the delight of beholding these same waters flowing like gentle currents through the world, rolling serenely their prolific waves, fulfilling their destined course, covering their borders with abundance; and not disappearing from the fields till the work of fertilization is complete.

II. If such is the utility of Beneficence, its EXAMPLE can hardly fail of making an impression. We never think of a beneficent man without wishing to resemble him. This is a

fact, My Brethren, verified by experience. Those, at least, who have been its objects, will, for the most part, hold the virtue itself in esteem, will inspire others with the love of it, and will keep their attention steadily fixed upon the model offered to the world by their benefactor. Describing, with that force and that vivacity which are excited in every man by his own personal afflictions, both the distresses which they have experienced, and the relief afforded them, they will not fail to interest their hearers. Nothing is more eloquent than thankfulness; nothing more expansive than a personal feeling of gratitude, when joined with admiration. In him who proclaims his obligations, it is rewarded by esteem. Except in some few cases of thankless and heartless men, there is formed in the bosom of every family that have been indebted to Beneficence, in every collection of sufferers which it has relieved, so many schools and seminaries for its propagation.

They, likewise, who have been witnesses to acts of charity, take a pleasure in recounting

them; more especially if they be unequivocally praiseworthy, and of such a sort that the character of the benefactor is a security for his motives. If, therefore, one has occasion to speak of any of those uncommon individuals, the ornaments of their age, the "lights of the world," the general Benefactors of the indigent, —of those distinguished, but concealed and unostentatious givers of alms, whom the public voice consecrates to our esteem, and proposes for our imitation, and whose names are associated in our minds with the idea of goodness, —if one has occasion to speak of any of those venerable men, to relate an example of their good works, or to bring together any of the circumstances of their lives, it is done with so much warmth of heart, with such a delightful cordiality of enjoyment, with such an entire assurance on the part of the speaker, that the hearer's heart is with him, the sympathy of their common nature is felt so forcibly, that all with one voice exclaim: And let us also, let us, according to our ability, follow the example of these men!

How, indeed, can we help endeavouring to imitate them? Is there any principle more congenial with the soul than Charity? What is there the thought of which more stirs the bosom, than the being able to say, "I have it in my power to extricate a wretch from his afflictions: I have at my disposal the happiness of more than one fellow-creature"? What is there so transporting as the conviction that you are infusing joy into a grief-worn spirit? Surely, My Brethren, surely there is not another delight worthy to be compared with this. To do good is the soul's real existence—the only existence wholly adapted to its nature—the only one which leaves it without void, without satiety, without longings, without regrets. This is the only occupation suited to persons of all ages. It is the only pleasure into which the ebullient spirit of the young, and the active strength of the mature man, and the lingering affections of old age, may plunge alike, without fear and without restraint. All human pursuits, alas, end in weariness and insipidity. There is but their season for the fiery feelings of early

youth,—there is but theirs for the love of glory,—there is but theirs for the aspirings of ambition. Habit withers every delight, blunts every sensation, extinguishes every glowing desire. From this law the sublime pleasure of doing good is alone exempt: whilst the tendency of all the rest is to distract and weary, this alone continually satisfies, but never produces disorder. Like the eternal fire of the goddess whom Rome adored, this holy flame ceases not to glow in the minds of the good, till quenched by the damps of the tomb. Oh, then, my soul, taught by those examples of charity which are offered to thy consideration, seek no longer beyond thyself, that happiness which is nearer to thee than thou thinkest; no longer traverse land and sea, every where begging for contentment and repose; strive no longer to enlarge, by struggling, the bounds of thy existence, that thou mayest lead thy vagrant thoughts through scenes of infinite variety; rather circumscribe thyself within thyself, and the immediate circle of the afflicted that surround thee; employ thyself in doing

good; alleviate the pressure of thine own desires by alleviating their misery; persevere in this course, and having done good, do so yet again.

With such enthusiasm, My Brethren, does the recollection of the man of Beneficence set before us that virtue, in the practice of which was his delight. How is it possible not to feel the force of an example that has such a legitimate hold upon our feelings? A life of beneficence, however, imposes, it cannot be denied, some privations. It implies such virtues as are little suited to the generality of mankind:—the renunciation of one's self; but a great part of the world love only themselves and their pleasures:—the habit of sensibility; but frivolousness is commonly the grave of feeling:—sympathy ever wakeful; but multitudes of persons grow unfeeling from suffering theirs to be deadened:—a familiarity with melancholy and disgustful scenes; but the worldly man averts his sight from such spectacles:—the utmost patience to hear and to examine a thousand humble details; but the

thoughtless has no leisure for these things, and is fretted with them at the very outset:—a determination not to yield to the disgust caused by ingratitude, and by those mistakes in the distribution of benefits, which cannot be altogether avoided; but these cloaks of covetousness are, perhaps, more generally adopted than the arguments which prove their futility: —such an application of superfluity as differs from the usual application of it; but it seldom happens that any portion of this superfluity escapes the greedy claims of luxury and extravagance:—a life of greater activity, yet of less publicity and parade; but vanity is never easy but while her children are charioted in the crowded thoroughfares of life:—in fine, My Brethren, Beneficence demands some degree of self-sacrifice—the consecration of a portion of our time and inclination to the public good, to the poor, and the unknown; and we are too weak, too little reasonable, and have too little of the true spirit of Christianity, thus to devote ourselves. If any thing, however, can overcome these obstacles, if there be any thing

capable of powerfully inclining us to works of charity—it is the example of men such as we have been instancing. The sight, the very idea of them speaks volumes in favour of the poor. In their presence no one can be unfeeling. Wherever they go they collect converts. Blessings spring beneath their steps. All that are of a kindred spirit flock round them. Beneath their standard assemble the chosen troops of virtue, the Enemies of wretchedness, the Protectors of the weak, the Restorers of the fallen. Their household, their sons and daughters, learn of them the art of doing good. They train them to it, as to a profession or an employment; they lay open to them the secrets of this science; inspire them with the love of it; give them a taste of its pleasures; and thus prepare them for one day taking their place. Do thou, O God! when it is thy will to take them from us, do thou at least maintain this glorious succession! Transmit, in an unbroken line, their virtues, with their patrimony; that the noble office of beneficence may be counted by their children as among their

rights of inheritance! May they be, from generation to generation, the fathers of the poor! If these Abrahams have walked before thee in integrity and in uprightness, do thou also make a covenant with the Isaacs, their descendants! Grant, O Lord, in the multitude of thy mercies, grant to these Solomons the heart of the Davids, their fathers; and accomplish, by pouring forth upon them thy benefits, what thou thyself hast said of him who succoureth the poor, that "his posterity is blessed."

III. Nor, Christians, can we believe, that the man whose useful life and great example survive with so much permanence, is deprived of the recompence of earthly prosperity. And, first, his charity lives in the memory of men. After what has been said, need I occupy your time in the proof of this? However powerful and appropriate an argument I might derive here from a reference to history, I will not bring forward its pages for that purpose: I will not remind you that the first benefactors of mankind were looked upon as

gods—that the first masters chosen by them were men of Beneficence; I will not recall to you, that the sole opinion which has remained unaltered through all ages, regards the esteem exacted by humanity; I will not paint to you Posterity, that impartial judge of the deeds of kings, hurling down the monuments of pride, condemning to oblivion all who were great for themselves alone,—above all, rending away, with one indignant hand, the blood-stained laurel, whilst with the other she crowns with flowers the godlike images of such sovereigns as Titus, as Antoninus, as Trajan, as Marcus Aurelius, as Henry. My Brethren, all ages have the same general features. Let us recall our attention to the aspect of society, as it appears in times nearer to our own; and let us ask ourselves: Amongst the crowd of those that by various means attract the world's regard, who are they on whom we love to dwell with fondness and esteem? Is it upon those who differ from other men in respect only of their talents, their immense riches, their exalted rank?

These, indeed, fix admiration for a time; but presently our pride takes offence at such titles to superiority, and retracts this ill-placed esteem. If there be found amongst them any who dedicate their talents to the cause of philanthropy,—their rank to the defence of the oppressed,—their riches to the help of the unfortunate, our admiration becomes permanent: it is not in our power to withdraw it. If God has laid upon the rich the charge of providing for the wants of the poor, it may be also said, that he has, on the other hand, laid upon us the charge of recompensing the rich. Accordingly, what is the consequence of this public esteem upon the charitable man? To his eyes all things wear a smiling aspect, and are coloured with the hues of joy. At every step he meets a friend. Not an eye but sparkles in his presence, not a heart but dilates to receive him, not a mouth but is opened to bless him! With what a pious trust he prays! With what delight he enters the temple of God, to worship there Him, of whom he is the image! With what

confiding self-abandonment does he, on all occasions, lean upon the bosom of the universal Father! With what ardour—with what success, (we cannot doubt) does he invoke him for his country, and for the afflicted! A Moses—he stretches forth his hands over the camp of Israel: a Daniel—he intercedes for the city and the people. Whether he mix with the world, or confine himself to his occupations; whether he live in seclusion, or seek happiness in domestic enjoyments; he finds always the same peace of mind, because his goodness of heart never forsakes him. Oh, how blessed is the existence of such a man! He rises in the morning with some purpose of beneficence in his mind; at night he lies down after its accomplishment; and sleeps to form another, and to accomplish that also. He enjoys life the more intensely, because he has no fear of Death. You, that are truly Christians, may easily conceive with what magnanimity he looks upon its approach,—with what resignation he waits for it,—with what calmness he meets it,—with what com-

posure he enters into that eternal night, or rather sinks to rest upon the bosom of his God. Oh, scene which excites emotions never to be forgotten! Approach his bed of death, all you who desire to die in peace. There shall ye behold with your eyes that which brings consolation at the last hour; you will learn to appreciate justly the nothingness of life, and the importance of "the one thing needful." There what tears are shed by the poor,—what blessings follow him to the grave,—what prayers for his children, —what a lesson on the power of virtue,—what a speaking demonstration in behalf of the truth I am now proclaiming! Oh, "let me die the death of the Righteous, and let my last end be like his!"

All this approbation, however, these earthly recompences, are, but the prelude to a higher reward. It is before God, and in eternity, that charity "remaineth for ever;" and this is the true sense of the promise declared in the text. Whatever may have been the lot of the man of Beneficence while on earth,

what is our eloquence—what our tears—to his unconscious dust? The righteous is but half repaid on earth; his recompence is in eternity. Thither, My Brethren, into that new condition, let us follow him; and there seek the true reward of his virtues. What a spectacle of glory here unfolds before me! It is the preparation for the General Judgment. The assembled Universe appears before its Judge. A profound silence reigns on every side. All mankind, mingled below, wait in trembling apprehension their final doom. Above that multitude of human beings, the throne of Christ alone appears. There is the Just, with his good works following him; there also, followed by his iniquities, is the Wicked: each appearing with his deeds and with his conscience. The faithful record of men's actions is produced. At the sounding of the trumpet, the seals of this dread Book are broken. The Judge, holding in his hands, on the one part misery and shame, on the other felicities and rewards, proceeds to their distribution. He reads—To whom, think you,

My Brethren, will he adjudge the highest recompence? To the great? All greatness shall disappear before the Almighty.—To the rich? None shall bring any thing with him into this new scene of things.—To them who shall have dazzled the world with their glory? Glory will be as nothing, when virtue shall be all in all. No! It is to THE BENEFICENT that the first and greatest rewards will belong,—to those who shall have wiped away the most tears, assisted the greatest number of the wretched, blessed with the most numerous benefits those who surrounded them in life. Heavens! how many wretches come forward to plead their cause; how many Lazaruses, whom they have made their friends, advance to intercede for them! How affectingly the mingled acclamations of the poor unite in their praise! Methinks I hear the Supreme Being addressing, at this awful moment, one of these just persons, in language such as this: "Well done, thou good and faithful Servant! Thou hast fulfilled the task which I allotted thee; thou hast loved thy brethren;

thou hast not turned thy back upon thy fellow-men; thou hast been obedient to thine own heart; thou hast kept my most holy law. I had given thee riches,—thou hast been a faithful steward: I had multiplied thy goods, —thou hast been just in thy administration. Thou hast seconded my watchful providence. Every time that thou hast been a blessing to the indigent, I have seen thee. The voice of his gratitude, no less than the cry of his supplications, has come up before me! I know also thy weaknesses and thy imperfections; even now the thought of them confounds thee in my sight. But fear not; I am thy God,—I forgive thee them: thy Saviour's tears and blood have washed them away. My heaven, my love, eternity, are thine: go, possess for evermore the joys that are laid up for my children."

And, assuredly, My Brethren, if any thing can constitute a claim to everlasting happiness, it is the having passed a life in doing good. The confidence of the Charitable rests upon the firmest basis. Assuredly, God had

not made the love of others the first want of the heart—he had not given to the sentiment of compassion such force, such activity, such a charm—he had not surrounded us with so many objects of distress—he had not revealed to us a religion whose first care is for the poor —he had not chosen for the founder of that religion, himself born in a condition of poverty, the noblest and most benevolent of beings—he had not imprinted upon every page, upon every line of the august depository of his will, maxims like these: "Disperse thy riches—Give alms of that thou hast"—"To do good forget not"—he had not "shaken the heavens and the earth," in order to confirm these lessons of charity—he had not exhausted his divine promises in the behalf of this virtue, to leave his work henceforth imperfect after the close of this existence. No, Christians! The life and death of the charitable man are but the preparation for a better life, but an evidence of immortality. That that divine spark which glowed in his mind, those generous feelings by which he was actuated, that spotless soul which dwelt within him,—

that all this should be extinguished with his breath; that the active principle of unceasing benevolence should descend into the night of the tomb, together with the lifeless clod which is the food of worms; that in the same dungeon should be immured at once the most noble of things with that which is the meanest; that all the hopes of this excellent human being should be found but a dream and a chimera;—this is an idea not to be borne; an idea insulting to the goodness of that God, who is able to continue to infinitude the duration of those spirits which are emanations of himself,—who is able to make them for ever blessed through the sentiment of love, by uniting them with objects upon whom their benevolence may be exercised,—who, in order to draw forth the adoring affections of the Blessed that encircle Him—even of "the rapt and burning Seraphim"—hath no need but of Himself, needs only to manifest his attributes and his works, to draw aside for a moment the veil which conceals his adorable essence, to permit the divine Intelligences to dive into the unfathomable depths of his goodness.

And this is the reason why Scripture is so rich in splendid images, and speaks with an amplitude so persuasive, when it represents charity as transferred to heaven, and describes the rewards which await it there. It represents alms as a seed scattered by the righteous over the field of eternity, where he will one day find their harvest: "He that soweth plenteously, shall reap plenteously." They are a loan deposited with the Almighty, who undertakes to return it with interest: "He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord: and look, what he layeth out it shall be paid him again." They are a transfer of capital by which better securities are obtained—they are fragments recovered from the shipwreck of death—the realizing of a possession—messengers whom the provident man sends before to prepare for his coming—a train which follows him—a compensation for the miseries of life—a body of evidence in his favour—an assemblage of titles which will witness for him before the great Judge. "A cup of cold water" (—what a touching expression!)—a cup

of cold water is regarded by the son of God as a debt which he binds himself to repay. St. Paul institutes a comparison between Charity, and such gifts and such virtues as are most precious and most excellent; and that, in order to declare that those gifts and those virtues are as nothing in the comparison: "And now abideth faith, hope, and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is Charity." Lastly, when our Lord anticipates for an instant, in idea, his sitting upon the throne of "the Judge of all the earth," he does it in order to place at the foot of that throne the chosen object of his regard—the charitable man; it is to address him in these affecting terms: "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

My Brethren, all beyond is concealed by a veil which mortal curiosity is not allowed to penetrate. In order to follow any further the righteous and his reward, it would be necessary to have entered with St. Paul, by the power of the understanding and the ardour of faith, into those untried realms whence none hath ever returned; it would be necessary to feel as none feel but the blessed; it would be necessary to have the privilege of a new revelation. Eternity! thou inestimable treasure, abyss unfathomable; thou shoreless ocean, thou limitless extent, thou endless duration! it sufficeth us to know that thou art his. Still he loves!—with him are the angels—the blessed spirits—Jesus! He beholds God face to face. Every moment he communicates, refines, exalts, extends his affections. The capacity of his heart, the sphere of his tenderness, go on widening in an eternal progression. Perhaps, by means we know not of, he still assuages the holy thirst which consumed him here,—perhaps he is still occupied IN DOING GOOD!

Now, Christians, let us withdraw our dazzled eyes from gazing on his glory; and be it permitted me to ask how you are affected by the picture that has been presented to you. We have not been describing, we are well convinced, a character unknown in this Church. Some among you may in this portrait have recognized their own features.—Ye benevolent Disciples of Christ! may the blessing of that God whom you represent on earth, of your country, and of the afflicted, be upon you! If the enumeration of those delights which are dear to you, has gladdened your hearts,—if the hope of those heavenly pleasures which we have described has lent new vigour to your efforts, then ours are well rewarded. Proceed in your noble career. Yet go on with unabated zeal to the attainment of the incorruptible crown, followed by our benedictions, still unwearied with the diffusion of blessings; and may the eye of the Great Giver of all good rest upon you for ever. And you, Poor, that have seen who are your real friends, may consolation spring up within your

souls. Let your gratitude and your industry second and support the care of your benefactors. Let us not, My Brethren, despair of happiness, so long as charity exists among us: let us cherish it in our hearts. Every thing incites us to the practice of charity—our feelings as men, and our duty as Christians. More may be effected than we ourselves imagine, if we give ourselves up with enthusiasm to the ardour of doing good. Oh, you—if any such there be in this assembly—who were before but imperfectly acquainted with this godlike gratification, had I been able to add to your happiness, by inducing you to love and cultivate it,—had my feeble arguments, seconded by the divine grace, proved the spark destined to kindle the fire of charity in your souls;—ye affluent, whom your conscience perhaps even now reproaches with having failed to do all the good that it has been in your power to do, and with having been rich, less in good works than in splendid means, but who are yet enabled to remedy this oversight, to correct this error,

—had I been able to set before you a splendour more desirable than the pomps and luxuries of opulence, a greatness less dazzling but more genuine, joys less turbulent but more substantial;—could I have exhibited that greatness and those delights which consist in doing good, in colours so attractive as to lead you to prefer them before that luxury which perverts the application of your riches, which stifles Beneficence at its very birth, which, by confining the attention exclusively to self, engenders a contempt or forgetfulness of the poor, and excludes the indigent from your calculations of means and plans of expenditure, which impoverishes those of narrow income by their attempts to rival you, and so multiplies the number of the indigent while it contracts their resources;—had I been able to withdraw you from the seductions of that luxury, but for which, Oh, my country! thou hadst still survived in thy unsullied prosperity, but which now is silently mining beneath thy strength;—had but I been able to

teach you to place your glory in your munificence, and to rest your greatness upon the multitude of your benefits,—how might we have rejoiced in the fruits of this present exercise of devotion! O God of love, teach us Thyself to resemble Thee! Amen.

SERMON XI.

ON THE REAL OBSTACLES TO A HOLY LIFE.

L. Ferriere.

SERMON XI.

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2 Cor. ii. 16.

Who is sufficient for these things?

SUCH was the reflection of St. Paul, upon a view of the labours of his apostleship: How then shall unassisted individuals like ourselves form such an union with the Almighty, and with his Holy Spirit, as may enable us to dispel the clouds of superstition; to overthrow the idols of human passion; to spread abroad the light of truth; to re-establish the empire of virtue; to act as the regenerators of the world?—"WHO IS SUFFICIENT FOR THESE THINGS?"

Such likewise is the earnest reflection of those sincere servants of Christ, who are deeply sensible of the importance of their duties, and of the necessity of their walking uprightly before God: "WHO IS SUFFICIENT FOR THESE THINGS?" they exclaim, humbly clinging to the foot of their Saviour's cross, imploring his help, resolved to leave nothing unattempted that may insure success. These words, however, which, in the mouth of the true believer, are expressive of a prudent distrust, and of a sincere desire to be supported by divine help, are unfortunately perverted by many persons into an excuse for sloth, and a pretext for evading the performance of their duties. They, too, cry out, "WHO IS SUFFICIENT FOR THESE THINGS?" but in a sense very different from the Apostle—Who is sufficient for the attainment of that exalted virtue, required by the Gospel? We acknowledge the excellence of the Christian morality, and would willingly follow it; but to this great undertaking our strength is unequal; we cannot discharge so many duties: He who hath made us is ac-

quainted with our frailties—upon his mercy we cast ourselves.

To dispel this pernicious illusion which has led so many to indulge in habits of sin, is the desirable object which we are now about to attempt; and in pursuance of our design, the language we shall address to the victims of this dangerous error will be of this tenour: God has bestowed upon you sufficient strength to practise the duties assigned you. If you neglect those duties, it is because you fail to do all that lies within your power. If you remain without alarm on account of your supineness, it is because you presumptuously calculate upon the divine support; and, without the slightest effort to obtain it, slumber in a false security. Almighty God! who by redemption hast exhausted for us the treasuses of thy mercy,—who hast put into our hands all the helps necessary to enable us to attain everlasting life, suffer not the seductive language of our passions to lead us out of the path of righteousness—to cause us to wander from that holiness without which no man shall see

the abodes of the blessed! Enable thy servant to dispel every error—thy children to receive into their souls the light of truth!

When an earthly potentate, gifted at once with consummate wisdom, and with much goodness, issues his mandates to his subjects, they would deem themselves deficient in the veneration due to him, and would justly regard themselves as guilty, should they dare to charge those commands with severity. Such would, at least, be the sentiments of all but the most degraded minds: yet do men presume to charge with severity The Eternal Good, The Supremely Wise! For, to complain of being unable to perform the commandments of God, is to declare that the laws He imposes are too severe. Hence we cannot, without offending the Almighty, assert that we are too weak to comply with his sacred ordinances.

We imagine, perhaps, that we shall escape his indignation, because we believe that God does not mark all that we do amiss; that it is impossible for an habitual neglect of duty to

take place, without being followed by the divine chastisement. But where have we learned that there are any of God's commands which we are not bound to obey? Do we not, on the contrary, find it written in the Holy Scriptures, that He pardons no infirmities but those which excite our sorrow—against which we maintain an unceasing struggle? that he pardons no wilful weakness—none which has been allowed to degenerate into a habit? that it is in the course of this unceasing struggle with sin, that that regeneration is brought about, through the merits of the Saviour, and under the influence of the Holy Spirit, upon which our forgiveness depends. Do we not read in the Holy Scriptures, that we ought "to work out our salvation with fear and trembling"—that God hates "lukewarmness"—that the kingdom of Heaven is to be inherited only by those who shall obtain it by ceaselessly renewed endeavours? After declarations such as these, on the part of God, "who is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent," it is impossible to

believe that he should pardon habitual sin. Consequently, to complain that we are too weak to obey his laws, is, I repeat, to declare that the laws he imposes are too severe; to harbour doubts respecting the sovereign justice, wisdom, and goodness of the Creator: it is to incur the guilt of offending Almighty God.

Let us, after this reflection, let us examine our own lives, and see whether we do in reality labour under that infirmity, which we allege in excuse for our sins. In this examination let us discard every consideration of self-love, and seek the truth alone. In what I am now going to address to you, you are requested to see nothing but the wish I entertain to scrutinize with humility my own heart, to enlighten yours, and conscientiously to discharge the ministry with which I am entrusted.

It is not possible for me, says one, to subdue my disposition to anger, and to restrain my habitual temper; I have already exerted my efforts for that purpose, but always without effect: and yet you know how to suppress your feelings of irritation against those whose esteem

or whose kindness it is of importance to you to preserve—before a superior, for instance, who would have it in his power to punish your bursts of irritation; or before the public, of whose censure you stand in awe. In these cases, you show yourself able to put up with offence, and to moderate the impetuosity of your character: how does it happen that it is only with the companion of your life, with your domestics, with your children, that you are unable to repress the violence of your disposition? Thus, My Brother, you see, it is not the ability which you want, but the will: you could amend this vice in you, if you would only do for God what you do for the world.

I, says another person, cannot restrain my natural tendency to detraction; I make continual but unavailing resolutions; I load myself on this account with unceasing reproaches—but in vain. True, you are incautious enough when the question concerns the reputation of your neighbour; but you know very well how to exercise discretion respecting your own;

then, you can stop short in your discourse precisely at the necessary point, without letting a syllable escape which might have the effect of creating the least suspicion unfavourable to you. You see, My Brother, it is not the power, but the will, which you want: you could restrain this inclination, if you would only do for God what you do for the world.

That man, who seems to be incapable of overcoming his avarice—who has not resolution to open his purse in the cause of charity, when there are no witnesses to observe him, he also knows how to conquer his infirmity, and to offer some little share of his gold to the distressed, when the eyes of others are turned upon him, and he is in the company of persons whom he wishes to please: he could amend his vice; but he does not choose to do that for God which he does for the world.

Yon slave to indolence, also, who, when urged to labour, alleges as his excuse an unconquerable slothfulness, is roused into activity the moment the love of pleasure seizes upon him: he could amend his vice; but he

refuses to do that for God which he does for himself.

And how is it, that we do not choose to practise the virtues we can command? Why do we not use in the service of God the ability with which his goodness has gifted us, and which we can call forth when our worldly interests are concerned? How is it, that our ability serves us for pursuing our business and our pleasures; whilst, as soon as we are required to exert ourselves to please our Maker, we find neither power nor resolution? Because, alas, our will is corrupted by sin, by evil habits, by carnal desires. We are, nevertheless, inexcusable if we neglect the divine commandments. For when we are beset by temporal dangers, without sufficient strength to extricate ourselves, what course do we adopt? We seek on every side for help—the child implores the protection of the parent, the infirm solicits the support of the strong. Why do we not then pursue the same method, in the trials to which virtue exposes us? Why decline to make use of the aid offered to us by religion,

and then begin to allege our incapacity? It cannot be said, that God leaves us to depend solely upon our own strength: He has given us his Word; which, if we read it with serious attention, cannot fail to endue our minds and hearts with strength and fortitude:—He invites us to his Temples; where are laid open to us all the means of acquiring religious wisdom.—What saving mercies does he set before us in the adorable mystery of redemption! By exhibiting to us, in our Lord's humiliation, the fulfilment of those oracles which announce the Messiah, and in his life on earth, a model of divine excellence, he affords confirmation to our faith; by teaching us how Christ hath suffered, he presents us with a perfect example of wisdom; by informing us that he hath suffered for us—for the purpose of redeeming us from death—he subjects to a salutary humiliation that pride which conceals from us and prevents us from deploring our misery, cures us of that unsettled disposition which so shamefully exposes us to falling into sin, instructs us that the God of mercies is at the same time a God

of justice and holiness; by teaching us that he suffered for us, in order to deliver us from eternal death,—that he is ascended into heaven to intercede for us, and to prepare a place for us also;—He hath mortified in our hearts that love of the world which is our destruction, and kindled in them that love of God which is our salvation. After such abundant mercies, he invites us to make yet further claims upon his grace; unasked he extends his protecting hand, for the purpose of raising us above the seductions of the world! And there are those —nor are they few in number—who, calling themselves Christians, yet seem to regard these precious benefits with contempt! Seldom do they peruse the Holy Scriptures; they are irregular in their attendance in the house of God; when they appear at the Holy Table, it is frequently without preparation; they neglect the sanctifying practice of prayer; they expose themselves to temptation, without imploring the divine help; and then they complain of their frailty! But, My Brethren, would you not, in like manner, sink under the

ordinary difficulties of life, were you to encounter them with the same presumptuous self-confidence, and the same unguarded rashness? I find myself, you say, unequal to the discharge of my duties, confessing thereby your need of help; and yet you ask that help with coldness and indifference—nay, not unfrequently neglect to ask it altogether—of Him, from whom you have a right to expect it. Creatures of dust, we are permitted to fly for succour to the Omnipotent—Sinners, the blessed privilege is ours of calling down the help of the Most Holy—and we know not, or refuse to understand, the value of this benefit, and to avail ourselves of it with thankfulness and humility!—Oh, were it even far less certain than it is, that prayer is the means of bringing down upon us the help of Heaven, its effect in recalling us to a sense of the divine presence, would be salutary, notwithstanding! What is the reason why we find virtue difficult? Why do we find our inclinations so hard to subdue? It is, in the first place, because we suffer ourselves to forget that "the eyes of the Lord are

upon" us,—it is, because, secondly, we forget to implore the aids of his gracious spirit.

Young man, who make your impetuous passions the subject of complaint, and are constantly repeating how much it costs you to keep the path of virtue, lift up your heart to God, and you will find strength! Remember, that in your moments of sinful frailty, when it seemed to you impossible to stem the torrent of temptation, the unexpected appearance of a virtuous father has sufficed to arm you with fortitude;—would you derive less support from the presence of your Heavenly Father? Pray to God,—and the sense of his immediate presence will of itself supply strength to your endeavours; pray to God,—and you will obtain the help of his grace! Ah, My Brethren, you would need no further conviction of the efficacy of prayer, in communicating the strength necessary to the performance of the most arduous duties, had you but accompanied us to yon bed of sickness, upon which a wretched father has lain for years, with pain and poverty for his companions, encircled by a

family to whom he can give neither instruction nor even food; who cry to him for bread, whilst all that he has to share with them is his tears. Unhappy man! yet he is patient —for he is accustomed to pray! never does a murmur escape him,—Never is he seen fretful or morose,—never known to despond. His every word and sentiment is marked by pious resignation and habitual meekness of disposition. We, who went to convey comfort to him, ourselves received a salutary lesson; we learned what the Lord does for those who call upon Him in their distress; we learned what the Christian is enabled to do, who relies with cordial faith upon Heaven; we were eye-witnesses of the efficacy of the prayers of the righteous, in calling down into his soul the strengthening and consoling graces of the Holy Spirit.

Methinks I perceive, in the looks of some present, a wish, if it were allowed them, to say: And we have prayed, but without obtaining; we have supplicated the divine aid in temptation, but were left to struggle with our weakness. But, have you, before you prayed,

been careful to examine your hearts, and to search out all your sins? Then, did you present yourselves before your God, full of grief for your errors, humbled by a sense of your corruption, animated with an eager desire of amendment? Did you implore the divine help through the merits of Jesus Christ, and implore it with humility and with earnestness? Have you meantime done all that depended upon you, to watch over your passions, and to resist the influence of your evil habits? When the object of your supplication has not been granted in the first instance, have you still persevered in prayer, with resignation and confidence? This is what God requires: if you have not felt thus, if you have not used these persevering efforts, the reason why you have failed to obtain the divine aid is easily understood—you have not complied with the terms upon which God has promised his grace; you have "not received," because, "you have asked amiss." In order to obtain help of God, it is necessary to ask according to the mode which God prescribes in his Word: you have only to make use of that

mode, and he will not withhold his merciful help, and you will receive strength in your weakness.

Let us then, My Brethren, cease to urge groundless excuses, and to gloss our delinquencies with this illusive pretence: let us frankly acknowledge, that, to carry through the momentous business of salvation, it is not in ability that we are deficient, but in will: we allow the world too strong a hold upon our affections: our wishes to please God have not the zeal and ardour which they should have: we are not animated by that ardent love of God, which his adorable perfections, his affecting goodness, his unlimited mercy, ought to excite in our souls; the great truths of religion possess no attractions for us, and we have no more than a faint and ineffective desire to observe the laws of the Gospel. Here is the real source of those pretexts, by which we seek to palliate the coldness and slackness of our obedience. When our desire to obey the will of God becomes deep and earnest, we shall discover that his commandments are not hard to

fulfil; when we have really resigned our affections to the Saviour, we shall find "his yoke easy and his burden light." Let us only love God in the degree in which he deserves our love—let us dread, beyond all things, his displeasure—let us bestow our best and warmest affections upon the All-perfect Being, our highest Benefactor, our Heavenly Father—let us take advantage of the assistance which he offers to us in the practice of our duties; and, instead of feeling disposed to complain of the difficulties of obedience, we shall experience the noble delights of virtue, we shall taste the sweetness of piety—the charm of a good conscience—the hope of eternal happiness; we shall exclaim with the Prophets and the Saints of old: Thy law, O God, refresheth the soul, thy precepts rejoice the heart, thy grace is made perfect in our infirmity—"We can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us!" God grant that this blessed state may be ours! Amen.

SERMON XII.

CHRIST WASHING HIS DISCIPLES' FEET:— A LESSON OF HUMILITY.

J. El. Cellerier.

SERMON XII.

JOHN xiii. 1—16.

Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that this hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end; &c.

IT is approaching—the awful hour is approaching, when our Lord must leave this world, and go unto his Father; and the Saviour's actions and instructions assume a character yet more sacred. In his more marked gravity of language, in the increased solemnity of his actions, and a more touching pathos in the subjects of his discourse, we perceive the approach of the final scene of his divine ministry. One feels, in reading this portion of our Gospels, that every word which proceeds from the

mouth of Christ, every further trace of his existence in this world, which he is about to redeem by his death, is destined to enlighten future generations, and worthy to be engraven upon the hearts of his people, with the remembrance of his blood and of his cross. But if there be one of these his parting lessons which ought to awaken our attention, and attach our affections to our Master, it is that which he gives us this day. This day, My Brethren, the Son of God humbles himself before you, so far as to "take upon him the form of a servant;" this day he attacks the grand enemy of Charity —Pride; and by abasing himself, by stooping to the office of a servant, and by "loving unto the end," he overwhelms it with the whole weight of his example and of his authority. Let us, then, make haste to follow in the steps of our Lord, that we may collect his instructions; let us enter into that humble abode, which conceals Him who is an object of adoration to angels; let us mingle in His train with his earnest and affectionate disciples. Let us contemplate this amazing lesson, and attend to

the minutest circumstances in this action of Jesus; while He speaks, let us lend an attentive ear, and apply his precepts to ourselves; this is the order we shall observe in the unfolding of our subject... Let us, My Brethren, draw near to Christ, as we would draw near to the death-bed of a venerated parent, preparing, for the last time, to set before us our duties and his will; let us draw near with an humble heart and a well-affected mind: Approach—the Parent whom Death is about to snatch from us is the Redeemer of mankind; his last lessons are lessons of love and of humility; his death-bed is the cross!

I. The first object proposed for our attention, is the extraordinary spectacle here set before us, with the various circumstances that belong to it. In entering upon so grand a subject, My Brethren, we feel impatient to arrive at the essential meaning of the text. We would willingly pass over in silence every particular merely accessory, did not their number, their importance, their close connection with the

leading fact, forbid. Thus, however secondary in importance it may appear, we must, in order fully to comprehend the action of our Saviour, determine the precise period of the "Supper" mentioned in the text. Our own opinion is, that the meal referred to is the Paschal Supper. Some few commentators assert the contrary, and thereby detract much from the solemnity of our Lord's action. It is implied, however, in the sequel of St. John's narrative, that it was the very night on which Christ was betrayed that he washed his disciples' feet. This solemn and symbolical action appears to be connected with the institution of the Lord's Supper, and, perhaps, with the contention in which, according to the account of St. Luke, the Apostles disputed who among them should be greatest. Nor is this all: we think we can discover, in the language of the text itself, allusions, more or less manifest, to the sacred repast. "BEFORE THE FEAST OF THE PASSOVER, WHEN JESUS KNEW THAT HIS HOUR WAS COME THAT HE SHOULD DEPART OUT OF THIS WORLD UNTO THE FATHER, HAVING LOVED HIS OWN WHICH

WERE IN THE WORLD, HE LOVED THEM UNTO THE END." What is this mark of love which Jesus further gives "unto the end," to those whom he had always loved? Shall we not find it to be the bread and wine of the new Covenant,—of which the Apostle makes mention in no other place, because his object was, not to repeat what had already been related by the other Evangelists, but only to supply their omissions? To continue: "AND SUPPER BEING ENDED,"—What supper? St. John had not before spoken of any meal, nor of the preparation for any. What supper, therefore, is presented to the mind of every reader, unless that which is related with so much solemnity in the preceding Gospels? It is then, in our opinion, at the supper of the Passover—in presence of that bread which is broken, and that wine which is poured out—that Christ offers this new lesson to his disciples. Associated in their memory with the idea and the memorial of his death, occurring between the supper and the cross, it will not fail to leave upon their hearts a deep and effectual impression. So far, the precise

moment of the action: let us now examine the action itself. "JESUS KNOWING THAT THE FATHER HAD GIVEN ALL THINGS INTO HIS HANDS, AND THAT HE WAS COME FROM GOD, AND WENT TO GOD; RISETH FROM SUPPER, AND LAID ASIDE HIS GARMENTS, AND TOOK A TOWEL, AND GIRDED HIMSELF. AFTER THAT HE POURETH WATER INTO A BASON, AND BEGAN TO WASH THE DISCIPLES' FEET, AND TO WIPE THEM WITH THE TOWEL WHEREWITH HE WAS GIRDED!"—Have we rightly understood, My Brethren? "Jesus, knowing that his Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God, rose from supper, laid aside his garments, and took a towel."—A strange association of ideas and circumstances; but which recurs every where, in the words of Jesus and in his actions, in his life and in his death—throughout his entire history. It is, indeed, the conciousness which the Son of God had of the surpassing dignity of his nature, and the unbounded extent of his authority, that imparts force to the lesson he gives us, and that determines him to give it. He who was at once

in "the form of a servant," and in "the form of God"—"the Word that was made flesh"—transports himself in spirit to that invisible and celestial world, in which he must ere long resume his abode and his glory. The Redeemer, looking back, contemplates himself as existing in the ages of eternity, before the universe received its being, in the bosom of the Father; he beholds the creation decked in its new-born loveliness, offering its first homage of gladness to Him, through whom and for whom all things were made; he beholds the spirits of heaven bending before his throne—seraphim and archangel uniting in adoration of the Only begotten of the Father:—Then looking forward along the line of future ages, he sees that spiritual and heavenly kingdom which the Father hath committed to his hands—those accumulated generations of men unenlightened by revelation, who now invoke his intercession and atonement, and come to claim the place which he "hath prepared for them in the mansions of bliss;" he hears the mingled voices of Angels, Saints, and Elders, who join in "singing the song of the

Lamb;" he hears the Hallelujahs of the Redeemed, that without remission succeed each other for ever and ever. From a review of this two-fold infinity of power, and glory, and duration, returning once more to this vale of miseries, which he is about to save, He contemplates himself veiled in perishable flesh, clothed with the humblest garb, surrounded by ignorant and sinful men, poorly lodged within the guilty walls of Jerusalem; and viewing this depth of his abasement, he sees fit to descend still lower—Hear! oh, Earth and Heaven! Disciples of Jesus, listen! He rises from the table —he assumes the attributes of a degrading servitude—stoops to perform the meanest duties of a slave—He appears at the feet of his Apostles, who "are not worthy so much as to unloose the latchet from his own!"

Oh! what must they have felt who beheld then the King of God's people and "the Desire of all nations," discharging for them the office of a servant! They perceive, long since, that the actions of Christ have an object which sometimes escapes their unassisted comprehension,

and they wait in silent astonishment and respect, until he deign to offer an explanation of what they are not able to understand; whilst a variety of impressions find a place more or less deep within their bosoms. Two of the most prominent of their number attract attention by advancing beyond the rest;—of these, one is St. Peter, the most zealous and impetuous of the disciples; the other is that Apostle, whose guilty breast conceals a project of monstrous criminality—a hideous secret. The Evangelist relates the exclamations and reluctance of the one—with regard to the other, he is wholly silent. But it is that very silence which rivets my attention upon Judas, and will not permit me to withdraw my eyes. At *his* feet is Christ —He touches him with his hands;—his penetrating and sorrowful looks encounter the traitor's;—his countenance expresses compassion—the affectionate and touching melancholy of a betrayed benefactor, who yet loves his betrayer, and is ready to die for him; whilst Judas is silent, hardens himself, and persists. Jesus, moved no doubt by divine compassion, lets fall

a word which, giving the perfidious disciple to understand that he penetrates his purpose, ought to have laid him, as with the stroke of lightning, at his master's feet—"YE ARE CLEAN, BUT NOT ALL." Judas is silent, hardens himself, and still persists! St. Peter shows himself, in the text, true to his character. Always hurried away by the warmth and vehemence of his feelings, zealous but rash, imprudent yet devoted, more prompt to feel than to reflect, to act than to understand, the Apostle is indignant at the thought of the humiliating office which his Lord is preparing to perform for him:—"LORD, DOST THOU WASH MY FEET? JESUS ANSWERED AND SAID UNTO HIM, WHAT I DO THOU KNOWEST NOT NOW; BUT THOU SHALT KNOW HEREAFTER." We have in this reply, My Brethren, a principle which it is of importance to keep in mind, in the reading of the Gospels. Our Saviour not unfrequently addresses himself to the memory only of his auditors, in order to impress them with a recollection of things which their understanding is to embrace upon some future occasion. Hence his

parables, his figurative language, those symbolical actions calculated to strike the imagination of those who, though unable to comprehend them as yet, would be enabled to understand them some other time. Our Lord's answer to Peter presently after, is an example of this. The Apostle, with his usual warmth, cries out, without listening to Jesus, "THOU SHALT NEVER WASH MY FEET." "IF I WASH THEE NOT," replies the Saviour, "THOU HAST NO PART WITH ME." In order to prevent the unavailing resistance of the Apostle from interfering with the lesson he had to give, our Lord arrests his attention, by addressing him in terms which were of a nature to produce an impression upon him and to subdue his resolution; whilst, at the same time, he impresses upon his mind, and upon all those who heard him, or who would hereafter read the narrative of St. John, a precept of importance with regard to the nature of that Redemption, by means of which he is about to confer salvation upon mankind, to wash away the sins of such as receive him for their master, and to secure to them an immortal

"part" with himself, in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Struck by the expressions of Christ, but as usual, passing without reflection, from one extreme to another, Peter appears to imagine that the washing of his feet was some sacrament, some new pledge of salvation and blessedness: "LORD," he instantly replies, "NOT MY FEET "ONLY, BUT ALSO MY HANDS AND MY HEAD. "JESUS SAITH TO HIM, HE THAT IS WASHED NEED- "ETH NOT SAVE TO WASH HIS FEET; BUT IS CLEAN "EVERY WHIT; AND YE ARE CLEAN, BUT NOT "ALL." In these words our Lord alludes to a custom among the Jews, of bathing themselves before proceeding to a repast, and of again washing their feet when arrived at the house where the entertainment is given; but he at the same time corrects his disciple's mistake, by making him understand, that, in order to become clean, in the sight of God, a different kind of purification is required from that which he solicits—a purification which those among the Apostles already enjoy, who possess a genuine faith in their Master, and a heart devoted to his service.

Peter continues silent: the "Son of man rises;" all eyes are fixed upon him, whilst the Apostles wait, silent but impatient, until, having taken off his servile vestments, and again become their Lord, he vouchsafe to explain an action so foreign to their notions. In this variety of extraordinary circumstances—the Son of God and King of Israel become their servant—the bread and wine—the towel, the bason, the blood, and death—there is something repugnant to all their ideas, something which eludes their comprehension, and baffles their limited capacities.

And you, My Brethren, whilst this spectacle is presented to you, you likewise fix your attention upon Christ, with secret dissatisfaction; and inquire to what end he stooped so low. To what end, to what end, you ask with arrogant murmurs, scandalized perhaps at your Lord's humiliation—to what end this extreme debasement?—Why this subjection of himself to vile and disgusting employments? Wherefore should a divine Being delight in humiliating at once the human nature and the

majesty of heaven? Wherefore, proud mortal? to confound and to convert thee! Listen, Christians, to your Saviour: "YE CALL ME "MASTER AND LORD: AND YE SAY WELL; FOR "SO I AM. IF I THEN HAVE WASHED YOUR "FEET; YE OUGHT ALSO TO WASH ONE ANO-"THER'S FEET. FOR I HAVE GIVEN YOU AN "EXAMPLE, THAT YE SHOULD DO AS I HAVE "DONE TO YOU. VERILY, VERILY, I SAY UNTO "YOU, THE SERVANT IS NOT GREATER THAN "HIS LORD, NEITHER HE THAT IS SENT GREATER "THAN HE THAT SENT HIM." Let us meditate upon this lesson, with reference to our own conduct; and let us bring to the task the most earnest efforts of attention, and the sincerest reverence.

II. "YE OUGHT ALSO TO WASH ONE ANO-THER'S FEET." What is the import of this lesson? Reflect for an instant, My Brethren, upon the spirit and leading features of the Gospel morality, and you will understand without difficulty the design of our Saviour. "Love one another"—such is the new commandment, the badge of Christ's disciples, the sum of his

morality. To unite, by a strong tie of benevolence and love, those who are subject to the same sorrows, misfortunes, and hopes, is one of the objects proposed by the Almighty in the revelation of Christianity to the world. But this first of virtues, charity, meets with a formidable enemy in our corrupt dispositions: that enemy is Pride, which, latent in every bosom, exercising more or less its powerful influence on all, enfeebles and chokes the growth of love. Charity would associate men together—Pride keeps them apart; Charity reminds us of what we owe to them—Pride, of what they owe to us; Charity directs our attention to their virtues—Pride, to their failings; Charity makes us kind and indulgent—Pride, selfish, and consequently severe. Hence he who was "meek and lowly in heart," declares himself the unsparing antagonist of pride; and appears never to use severity but in order to condemn it. He reproves and threatens it in his parables; he fulminates against it in the hypocritical scribes of Jerusalem; he crucifies it with himself on Calvary. But this is not enough: it is neces-

sary to inspire a hatred of it; to exhibit it as the height of folly, and an absurdity at once odious and contemptible in a disciple of Christ. He, the Prince of Life, the Head of the Church, the Judge of mankind, the Sovereign of the universe—proceeds to humble himself, to reduce himself to the meanest condition, to put to shame the presumptuous disciple who should dare to stand up in defence of pretensions which his master has trampled under foot. He proceeds to degrade himself before his inferiors; and by his example to instruct them, that, in the eyes of him who loves his neighbour as himself, there are neither high nor low, nor immunities nor degrees,—that for the Christian there are only services to render, love to manifest, humility to put on, the most beneficent of masters to imitate. He takes a towel—he pours out water—he washes his disciples' feet, and says: "IF I, THEN, YOUR LORD AND "MASTER, HAVE WASHED YOUR FEET, YE ALSO "OUGHT TO WASH ONE ANOTHER'S FEET." You understand this, My Brethen—you understand this. It is humility, the source of love—humi-

lity in its application to the relations of society —humility, that teaches us to love and to minister to others, by teaching us to humble ourselves when charity requires—this it is which is enforced in this action of Christ, and which forms, consequently, the object of this discourse. Christ instructs you, sometimes to forget yourselves that you may think of others; not to contend among yourselves who shall be the greatest in the kingdom of the Messiah, but to seek to become so by obedience and love. It is the will of Christ, that the first feeling of your hearts, and the first want in your relations with each other, should be, not the wish to seize upon the place which you consider due to you, but the love of peace and of your brethren. It is his will, then, that, in the business of life, you should be seen cultivating kindness and peace; ready, as occasion offers, to make the first advance in the intercourse with those beneath you; not to be strict in exacting your claims; and in particular to shun all occasion of dissension. It is his will, that you never seek to dazzle, to domineer, to outshine others;

but to study to exalt their good qualities, and occasionally to contrast them with your own failings. It is his will, that you avoid no less unjustly to depreciate others, than you usually avoid doing an injury to yourselves. It is his will, that, instead of being vexed at witnessing the superiority of those whom society or Providence have stationed above you, you should acknowledge that superiority with readiness and without jealousy; and submit to it with good will, as one of the conditions of the existence to which God has called you. It is, in short, his will, that you should conduct yourselves with humility towards God, and, if need be, towards your brethren; in order to do them service, and to promote unanimity.—Such is the lesson which Christ gives you this day; you cannot but understand it; and against a lesson so positive and forcible, no pretext nor illusion can avail. You may shut your hearts against it, but you cannot misunderstand it. Oh, how necessary is such a lesson in this vain-glorious age, when the degenerate Church of Christ has almost entirely lost that "ornament of a meek

spirit," with which her Lord rejoiced to see her decked—when the Christian, far from resembling, in mildness and simplicity, the "little children of whom is the kingdom of heaven," and from sacrificing his self-love to the love of his brother, too often makes Charity herself the handmaid of pride! Yes, My Brethren, it cannot be denied, and must be told —told honestly, though with regret—that this evil is the characteristic of our times, and, it may be, to a certain extent of our Church. We have charity, but rarely the charity which is victorious over pride. We have the charity which gives—that which confers obligations—even that which abounds in zeal; but rarely that which puts up patiently with an affront or a neglect. We show ourselves zealous in conferring favours upon our inferiors; but we love to recollect the distance which separates us. We "love those who love us"—occasionally even we can forgive ingratitude; but hardly ever do we pardon them who have overlooked our claims, or wounded our pride. With us, charity consoles the afflicted, gives birth to numberless

patriotic and beneficent institutions, seeks out and alleviates every species of distress; but it does not prevent dissentions—it does not stifle resentments—it does not reconcile kindred and neighbours. It does not enable us to bear with mildness those who dare to tell us the truth. It is wanting in humility. Oh, My Brethren! I conjure you, by the momentousness of this subject, by the grand and affecting recollections to which it gives rise, by your salvation and the improvement of your souls, hear me while I exhort you to the study of yourselves! It is not far off, it is not in a foreign land, it is not among the foes of religion, or the slaves of the passions, that we will point out to you evidences of the existence of that evil which Christ condemns; it is among us, among believers themselves. Why is it, that we so often see men esteemed for their virtues, whose previous life had been uniformly rational and considerate, suddenly adopt a very different line of conduct, and so far forget themselves, as to be remarkable for their disregard of those very duties and decencies, and that charity, of the observance

of which they had hitherto been striking examples? Why, but because something has shocked their self-love, and laid open the extent of its fearful empire over them? Because such men, though just and charitable by nature, had never learned of Jesus to be meek and lowly in heart. When is it that discord in a neighbourhood, or divisions in a family, are difficult to heal? In what cases is reconciliation to be despaired of, resentments to be deemed immortal, and the scandal of litigation interminable? It is not so much when men's interests are endangered, as when their self-love is wounded—a principle more powerful even than the ties of blood, and the affections of the heart. Whence arises that disposition to distrust and suspect their superiors, and the refusal to extend the same justice to them which they would not deny to persons of their own rank, which are so common among the lower classes? Whence comes the suspicion which they so readily evince, that the motives of those whom Providence has placed above them, are interested, their purposes calculated

to gratify their own contempt, and to mortify and overbear their inferiors? It comes from wounded pride; which will not allow them to judge impartially. Why is it so delicate a thing to advise, even where the utility of advising would be certain, and the right to it incontestable? Why is it, that, merely for want of being able to render the truth palatable to him whom it concerns, and to whom it is of importance, is one obliged to wink at so many abuses, to allow so many serious affairs to go wrong, to suppress so many salutary counsels? Why are the simplest and most obvious admonitions of the truth, often rejected with indignation and rudeness, by those whose best course would have been to listen to them with docility, and to turn them to profit? Why is fraternal reproof, among us, a thing, in one word, impossible? Why is the exercise of the ministry in a manner confined to the pulpit and to the poor; and why do they, whose office it is to take care of men's souls, find themselves almost excluded from giving advice, exhortation, and reproof, to him who is wandering from the

right way, and to whom such aid would frequently be of incalculable benefit? It is because our overgrown self-love no longer allows us to lend a patient hearing to truths which give us pain, but is offended by them, whatever care may have been taken by the charity of the adviser to soften them down; because, so far from contributing to our amendment, they often only tend to blind us more, and to thrust us further on in the destructive path whence they were meant to recall us: we make poison of medicine, and never allow the physician to administer it but with dread.—You yourself—you, My Brother, who are perhaps at this moment disposed to accuse me of drawing an exaggerated picture, allow me to examine your own heart, and consent to join with me in the scrutiny. Call to mind your conduct, the inmost sentiments of your bosom; the opinions, comparisons, and wishes, which are at times suggested to you by the thought of your connections, your neighbours, your relations—and judge yourself. Would you WASH THE FEET of your inferiors—that is,

would you, in order to serve them, overlook the distance which separates you? Would it not vex you, to see them or others forgetting it? Would you listen with patience to the harsh but just advice of your equals? Do you frankly and honestly admit the superiority of those who are better than you? Or rather, would not self-love, concealed in every secret passage of your heart, find means, in all these cases, to pervert your judgment, to change the figure and the distance of every object that surrounds you, and to urge you on perhaps to some violent step, disgraceful to you and to your religion? Alas! Alas! need I wait for a reply, or is there one among us who recognises not himself in this picture? Yet do we call ourselves Christians, nevertheless, and really think that we love one another, and imitate Jesus!! happy still, if we do not take pleasure in our pride, and deck it out in the attractions of some high-sounding name; not perceiving—so blinded are we!—that, under every point of view, its absurdity and hatefulness are manifest; whether considered with reference

to God or man, to the natural state of things, or to the Gospel, to the present life or the future, to duty or to interest. By how many arguments might we convince you of this! We could demonstrate to you, that this want of humility in the various relations of life, makes your entire course through it rugged and thorny; that it is an injury done to society at large—a source of evil, public and private. We could tell you, that it makes you mean and ridiculous in the eyes of men, and is productive of an effect precisely contrary to that which we look for. We could hold up to your admiration the dignified character of the true Christian; who, uniting humility with charity, and superior to all the littlenesses of self-love, shows himself great—because he is simple, because he is ingenuous, because he is indifferent to self, because he is not subject to irritation, because he "thinketh no evil," because he excuses every thing—hopes every thing—endures every thing! We could draw the delightful picture of a community, whose members have learned, in obedience to the

precepts of Christianity, to subdue their haughty tempers, and to look upon all men at all times as brethren; we could point to you the most opposite conditions in such a community, connected by confidence and love—charity, public spirit, patriotism, displayed with new and irresistible energy—subordination maintained—abuses prevented—improvement facilitated—the state prosperous—families united, and individuals happy. But, unanswerable as such arguments would be, we cannot produce them now—a spectacle, at once too affecting and too solemn, is before our eyes, and excludes the aid of all secondary argument and every appeal to human motives.

Jesus—the example of Jesus—it is this which is to-day presented to us, and which claims our undivided thoughts! Jesus—his actions—his discourses—his life,—here is matter enough to cover us with shame! You who call yourselves his disciples, and who yet behave towards each other with harshness and with pride, to what page can you turn in the Gospel of Christ, in which his example does not give you pause to

blush? Is it possible that you can follow him through this vale of tears—the theatre at once of his degradations and his grandeur—without having your eyes opened to perceive your own folly?—Is your attention attracted to his birth? Enter then beneath the humble roof at Bethlehem—contemplate that manger, the cradle of the King of God's Church, come to visit his Empire, those simple men who present to the monarch the first fruits of his subjects' homage, behold the attributes of obscurity and humiliation which decorate his palace, and listen to that voice which saith to you: "THE SERVANT IS NOT GREATER THAN HIS LORD; NEITHER HE THAT IS SENT GREATER THAN HE THAT SENT HIM." Would you behold a far different spectacle? Go up into Mount Tabor; and see him there enveloped in the divine glory—it is no more the carpenter's son, who is praying there, but the Son of God, surrounded by the glory of his "Father who is in Heaven." The spirits of just men glorified appear with him—they pay him homage—they celebrate his deeds. But what is that triumph of their Lord, which they

are come to admire! He talked, we are told in the Gospel, of the death which he was to undergo at Jerusalem; and by thus putting us in mind of Christ's inconceivable abasement, even in the midst of his glory, they already put to shame the haughty disciple who should refuse to humble himself in imitation of his Lord.

Let us ascend still higher.—Let us penetrate even to that throne of glory, where Christ is seated, and before which all nations shall one day assemble. The last trumpet sounds—the dead rise—a conflagration consumes the world—the heavens vanish—the universe beholds its Judge; and those poor atoms to whom we give the designation of monarch or subject, high or low, powerful or feeble, appear in judgment. What sentence proceeds from the lips of the judge? "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of these little ones, ye have done it unto me." O thoughtless being that we are!—Jesus puts himself in the place of that despised Christian, the sight of whom inspires us with contempt—and we refuse to humble ourselves

before him! Now, Christians, are your eyes open? Do you begin to understand the Scriptures? Do you begin to perceive the worth of your pride, and the unbecomingness and folly of it in a disciple of Christ? Well—the lesson does not close here: something yet remains. Fix your eyes once more upon the Saviour; and, in imagination, strip off from him that terrible splendour: reclothe him with mortal flesh; remove his throne of glory; think that you are at Jerusalem—in the "upper room" where he celebrated the Passover. He appears before you, in the attitude of one who serves, and with the attributes of a mean and despised condition—the water, the towel, the bason;—he washes your feet, and says—"I GIVE YOU AN EXAMPLE THAT YE SHOULD DO AS I HAVE DONE TO YOU." And is this same man the Son of God! Is he your King! And does he die for you—and to-morrow, perhaps, will bring you to judgment! Ah, now let your heart be smitten—now let shame and confusion cover your face! Now, then, to your Saviour, prostrate before him in the dust, to struggle with

this hateful PRIDE—to lay aside your pretensions, your rights, your demands, and for his sake to be ready to serve, to forgive, to love,—to stoop, if need be, to the performance of duties to a proud heart the least endurable.

It is impossible, My Brethren,—I cannot but conclude it impossible,—that reflections such as these, howsoever presented to you, should not produce some impression upon your hearts. But, alas! for frail and changeful creatures like ourselves, something more is required than to feel, to resolve, to wish. It would be necessary, if it were possible, to find some mode of giving permanency to those impressions,—of renewing them at stated periods with that vigour of which time may have deprived them. Now, such a mode, My Brethren, we have pointed out to you, in the conclusion of the present discourse—or rather Jesus himself offers it to you in the text of this day. It is this: Connect together in your minds the recollection of what Christ was desirous to impress upon them, at once—his death, and the example of his

humility; and let the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, while it reminds you of Jesus on the Cross, remind you likewise of Jesus washing his Apostles' feet. At solemn intervals, the Church assembles her children, and distributes to them the bread of life. For this holy service you prepare yourselves, by some days of séclusion—by some hours, at least, of pious meditation. Think then—think at those times, of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples; think of the dying command he leaves you; think of the offences to the commission of which you have been led by PRIDE—of the efforts you ought to make to atone for them—of the manner in which you ought to guard against them for the future. The hour is come—the hallowed bell tolls—the sacramental words are uttered—you rise with emotion, and, with pious awe, you cross the sanctuary, in order to take your place at this banquet of love.

Now, then, think again of Jesus washing his disciples' feet; think that those Christians, high and low, rich and poor, who surround you, and in whose company you approach the Holy

Table, are all your brethren; that the regard of the Supreme Judge constitutes the only difference between them and you; and that that assemblage of repentant sinners, who supplicate together the same God, and share in the same sacrament, at the foot of the same throne of grace, ought, like their first predecessors in the faith, to be of one heart and one mind.

You are now before the Sacred Table,—the pledges of God's infinite love are upon your lips—the eyes of the Almighty rest upon you—the sacred vow is pronounced. Now, think again, that this vow made to Jesus—to Jesus washing his disciples' feet—is the oath of love and of humility. Think how to drive away from your bosoms that pride which would poison your souls, and cause you to "eat and drink your own condemnation." Think, at this solemn moment, think after the sacred rite—think, in short, as often as this awful sacrament comes to excite the emotions of your souls, or to occupy your thoughts—think of JESUS WASHING HIS DISCIPLES' FEET; and so shall you learn of him to put on the meek and tender

affections of the true believer. Thus let us, frail and inconstant creatures—a melancholy union of changefulness and feeling, of meanness and of pride, of selfishness and love—let us thus collect and concentrate together every remembrance and every connected thought, that can tend to promote in us a temper of meekness and humility!

O, blessed symbols of the Lord's supper, simple and sublime memorials of the affecting humility of my Saviour! Awaken in our inmost souls that warmth of feeling, of gratitude, and love, which, raising us, in the concerns of daily life, above our habitual indifference, sometimes renders us capable of a general devotedness, and a noble self-sacrifice.—And Thou, the Supreme God, Thou who, in thy invisible omnipotence, attendest us at the table of thy Son, to save or to punish,—Thou, whose voice we are now about to hear there, and who speakest to us even at this time, show forth in us thy power, and enable us to walk as Christ himself hath walked! Amen.

FINIS.

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